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CHOPIN

AND

OTHER MUSICAL ESSAYS

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AND

OTHER MUSICAL ESSAYS

BY

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AUTHOR OF "ROMANTIC LOVE AND PERSONAL BEAUTY"

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1910

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I

CHOPIN

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THE GREATEST GENIUS OF THE PIANOFORTE

Leipsic, the centre of the world's music trade, exports about one hundred thousand dollars' worth of music to America every year. I do not know how much of this sum is to be placed to the account of Chopin, but a leading music dealer in New York told me that he sold three times as many of Chopin's compositions as of any other romantic or classical composer. This seems to indicate that Chopin is popular. Nevertheless, I believe that what Liszt wrote in 1850, a year after the death of Chopin—that his fame was not yet as great as it would be in the future—is as true to-day as it was forty years ago. Chopin's reputation has been constantly growing, and yet many of his deepest and most poetic compositions are almost unknown to amateurs, not to speak of the public at large. A few of his least characteristic pieces are heard in every parlor, generally in a wofully mutilated condition, but some of his most inspired later works I have never heard played either in private or in the concert hall,

although I am sure that if heard there they would be warmly applauded.

There is hardly a composer concerning whom so many erroneous notions are current as concerning Chopin, and of all the histories of music I have seen that of Langhans is the only one which devotes to Chopin an amount of space approximately proportionate to his importance. One of the most absurd of the misconceptions is that Chopin's genius was born in full armor, and that it did not pass through several stages of development, like that of other composers. Chopin did display remarkable originality at the very beginning, but the apparent maturity of his first published works is due to the fact that he destroyed his earliest efforts and disowned those works which are known as posthumous, and which may have created confusion in some minds by having received a higher "opus" number than his last works.

Another misconception regarding Chopin is that his latest works are morbid and unintelligible. The same charge was brought by philistines against the best works of Beethoven, Schumann, and Wagner. The fact is that these last works are of an almost matchless harmonic depth and originality, as superior to his earlier works as Wagner's last music dramas are to his first operas. I make this comparison with Wagner advisedly because, although I have

the most exalted notions of Wagner's grandeur and importance, I do not for a moment hesitate to say that in his own sphere Chopin is quite as original and has been almost as revolutionary and epoch-making as Wagner. Schumann was the first to recognize the revolutionary significance of Chopin's style. "Chopin's works," he says, "are cannons buried in flowers;" and in another place he declares that he can see in "Chopin's G minor Nocturne a terrible declaration of war against a whole musical past." Chopin, himself, modest as he was in his manners, wrote to his teacher Elsner, in 1831, when he was twenty-two years of age: "Kalkbrenner will not be able to break my perhaps bold but noble determination to create a new epoch in art."

Now, why has the world been so slow in recognizing that Chopin stands in the very front rank of creative musicians? One reason doubtless is that he was so quiet and retiring in his personal disposition. His still, small voice was lost in the din of musical warfare. He warmly defended the principles of the romantic school, if necessary, and had decided opinions of other musicians, especially of the popular pianists of his day who vitiated the public taste with their show pieces; but he generally kept them to himself or confided them only to his friends, whom he even occasionally implored to keep them secret. Had he, like Richard Wagner, at-

tacked everybody, right and left, who stood in the way of the general recognition of his genius, his cause would have doubtless assumed greater prominence in the eyes of the public, even though the parlor piano does not afford so much play-ground for warfare as the operatic stage.

The chief reason, however, why musical authorities have so long hesitated to acknowledge that Chopin is one of the very greatest explorers and pioneers in the domain of their art, is to be found in what, for want of a better term, may be called æsthetic Jumboism. When the late lamented Jumbo was in New York he attracted so much attention that his colleagues, although but little inferior in size, had "no show" whatever. Everybody crowded around Jumbo, stuffing him with bushels of oranges and apples, while the other elephants were entirely ignored. As elephants are intelligent animals, is it not probable that Pilot, the next in size to Jumbo, went mad and had to be shot because he was jealous of the exclusive attentions bestowed on his rival? In æsthetics, this Jumboism, this exaggerated desire for mammoth dimensions, seems to be a trait of the human mind which it is difficult to eradicate. It is a suggestive fact that the morbid, sham æstheticism which prevailed in England a few years ago, chose for its symbol the uncouth sunflower. And many who know that a sunflower is less beautiful

and fragrant than a violet, will nevertheless, on visiting a picture gallery, give most of their attention to the large canvases, though the smaller ones may be infinitely more beautiful. It cannot be said that the critics of art or literature follow the popular disposition to measure genius with a yard-stick ; but in music there seems to be a general tendency to do this. Liszt remarks, apropos, in his work on Chopin : "The value of the sketches made by Chopin's extremely delicate pencil has not yet been acknowledged and emphasized sufficiently. It has become customary in our days to regard as great composers only those who have written at least half a dozen operas, as many oratorios, and several symphonies."

Even Schumann, and Elsner, Chopin's teacher, seem to have been affected a little by this irrational way of looking at music. Schumann, in a complimentary notice of Chopin's nocturnes, expresses his regrets that the composer should confine himself so strictly to the pianoforte, whereas he might have influenced the development of music in all its branches. He adds, however, on second thought, that "to be a poet one need not have written ponderous volumes ; one or two poems suffice to make a reputation, and Chopin has written such." Elsner who was unusually liberal in his views of art, and who discovered and valued his pupil's originality long before Schumann did, nevertheless bowed

before the fetish of Jumboism in so far as to write to Chopin in Paris that he was anxious, before he departed this Vale of Tears, to hear an opera from his pen, both for his benefit, and for the glory of his country. Chopin took this admonition to heart sufficiently to ask a friend to prepare for him a libretto ; but that is as far as the project ever went. Chopin must have felt instinctively that his individual style of miniature painting would be as ineffective on the operatic stage, where bold, *al fresco* painting is required, as his soft and dreamy playing would have been had he taken his piano from the parlor and placed it in a meadow.

Besides Chopin's abhorrence of musical warfare and his avoidance of the larger and more imposing forms of the opera, symphony, and oratorio, there were other causes which retarded the recognition of his transcendent genius. The unprecedented originality of his style, and the distinct national coloring of his compositions, did not meet with a sympathetic appreciation in Germany and Vienna, when he first went there to test his musical powers. Some of the papers indeed had a good word for him, but, as in the case of Liszt and later of Rubinstein, it was rather for the pianist than for the composer. On his first visit to Vienna he was greatly petted, and he found it easy to get influential friends who took care that his concerts should be

a success, because he played for their benefit, asking no pecuniary recompense. But when, some years later, he repeated his visit, and tried to play for his own pecuniary benefit, the influential friends were invisible, and the concert actually resulted in a deficit.

Chopin's letters contain unmistakable evidence of the fact that, with some exceptions, the Germans did not understand his compositions. At his first concert in Vienna, he writes, "The first allegro in the F minor concerto (not intelligible to all) was indeed rewarded with 'Bravo!' but I believe this was rather because the audience wished to show that they appreciated serious music than because they were able to follow and appreciate such music." And regarding the fantasia on Polish airs he says that it completely missed its mark: "There was indeed some applause by the audience, but obviously only to show the pianist that they were not bored." The ultra-Germans, he writes in another letter, did not appear to be quite satisfied; and he relates that one of these, on being asked, in his presence, how he liked the concert, at once changed the subject of conversation, obviously in order not to hurt his feelings. In a third letter, in which he gives his parents an account of his concert in Breslau, in 1830, he says that, "With the exception of Schnabel, whose face was beaming with pleasure, and who

patted me on the shoulder every other moment none of the other Germans knew exactly what to make of me;" and he adds, with his delicious irony, that "the connoisseurs could not exactly make out whether my compositions really were good or only seemed so."

Criticisms culled from contemporary newspaper notices and other sources emphasize the fact that the Germans were at that time blind to the transcendent merits of Chopin's genius. The professional critics, after their usual manner, found fault with the very things which we to-day admire most in him—the exotic originality of the style, and the delightful Polish local color in which all his fabrics are "dyed in the wool," as it were. How numerous these adverse criticisms were, may best be inferred from the frequency with which Schumann defended Chopin in his musical paper and sneered at his detractors. "It is remarkable," he writes, "that in the very droughty years preceding 1830, in which one should have thanked Heaven for every straw of superior quality, criticism, which it is true, *always lags behind unless it emanates from creative minds*, persisted in shrugging its shoulders at Chopin's compositions—nay, that one of them had the impudence to say that all they were good for was to be torn to pieces." In another article, after speaking in the most enthusiastic terms of

Chopin's trio, in which "every note is music and life," he exclaims, "Wretched Berlin critic, who has no understanding for these things, and never will have—poor fellow!" And seven years later, in 1843, he writes, with fine contempt for his critical colleagues, that "for the typical reviewers Chopin never did write, anyway." And this, be it remembered, was only six years before Chopin's death.

Not a few of the composers and composerlings of the period joined the professional critics in their depreciation of Chopin's works. Field called his "a talent of the sick chamber." Moscheles, while admitting Chopin's originality, and the value of his pianistic achievements, confessed that he disliked his "harsh, inartistic, incomprehensible modulations," which often appeared "artificial and forced" to him—these same modulations which to-day transport us into the seventh heaven of delight! Mendelssohn's attitude toward Chopin was somewhat vacillating. He defended him in a letter against his sister's criticisms, and assured her that if she had heard some of Chopin's compositions "as he himself played them" for him, she too would have been delighted. He adds that Chopin had just completed "a most graceful little nocturne," of which he remembered much, and was going to play it for his brother Paul. Nevertheless, he did not recommend the pupils at the Leipsic Conservatory to study

Chopin's works, and various utterances of his are on record showing that he had a decided artistic antipathy for the exotic products of Chopin's pen. To give only one instance. In one of the letters to Moscheles, first printed in *Scribner's Magazine* for February, 1888, he complains that "a book of mazurkas by Chopin, and a few new pieces of his are so mannered that they are hard to stand."

I have dwelt so much on the attitude of the Germans toward Chopin, because I am convinced that in this attitude lies one of the main reasons why no one has hitherto dared to place him in the front rank of composers, side by side with Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner. For the Germans are the *tonangebende* (the standard-setting) nation in music today, and, as there seems to be a natural antipathy between the Slavic and the Teutonic mind, the Germans are apt, like Mendelssohn, to regard as mannerism what is simply the exotic fragrance which betrays a foreign nationality. The ultro-Teutons still persist in their depreciation of Chopin. In the latest edition of Brockhaus's "Conservations-Lexicon" we read, apropos to Chopin's larger works, that "he was deficient in the profounder musical attainments" (!) Dr. Hanslick, generally considered the leading German critic of the period, in a 534-page collection of criticisms, discussing twenty concert seasons in Vienna, has only about half a dozen and by

no means complimentary references to Chopin. And even the late Louis Ehlert, in his appreciative essay on Chopin, comes to the conclusion that Chopin is certainly not to be ranked with such giants as Bach and Beethoven. This is Teutonism, pure and simple. No doubt Chopin is, in some respects, inferior to Bach and Beethoven, but in other respects he is quite as unquestionably superior to them. He wrote no mammoth symphonies, but there is a marvellous wealth and depth of ideas in his smaller works—enough to supply half a dozen ordinary symphony and opera writers with ideas for a lifetime. His works may be compared to those men of genius in whose under-sized bodies dwelt a gigantic mind.

Schumann appears to have been the only contemporary composer who did not underrate Chopin. Whether he would have gone so far as to rank him with the greatest of the German composers, I cannot say, for he avoids direct comparisons. But if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Schumann flattered Chopin more than any other master, for his pianoforte works are much more in the manner of Chopin than of Bach or Beethoven. I do not mean direct imitation, but that unconscious adoption of Chopin's numerous innovations in the treatment of the piano and of musical style, which are better evidence of influence than the borrowing of an idea or two. He himself testified to the "inti-

mate artistic relations" between him and Chopin. Moreover, his praise of Chopin is always pitched in such a high key that it would seem as if praise could no higher go. It was he who first proclaimed Chopin's genius authoritatively, and to this fact he often referred subsequently, with special pride. The very first article in his volumes of criticisms is devoted to Chopin's variations on "La Ci Darem'," published as "opus 2." In those days, Schumann used to give his criticisms a semi-dramatic form. On this occasion he represents his *alter ego*, Eusebius, as rushing into the room with a new composition, and the exclamation "Hats off, gentlemen! a genius!" He then analyzes the variations in glowing poetic language and rapturously exclaims at the end that "there is genius in every bar." And this was only one of the *early* works of Chopin, in which he has by no means attained his full powers. Of another quite early work, the second concerto, he writes that it is a composition "which none of us can approach except it be with the lips to kiss the hem;" and later on, the Preludes, the most inspired of his works, led Schumann to exclaim that Chopin "is and remains the boldest and noblest artistic spirit of the time."

Schumann would have found it difficult to induce any of his countrymen to endorse his exalted opinion of Chopin, but the Hungarian Liszt joined

hands with him heartily, and pronounced Chopin "an artist of the first rank." "His best works," he says, "contain numerous combinations of which it must be said that they did nothing less than create an epoch in the treatment of musical style. Bold, brilliant, enchanting, his pieces *conceal their depth behind so much grace, their erudition behind so much charm*, that it is difficult to emancipate one's self from their overpowering magic and estimate them according to their theoretic value. This fact is already recognized by some competent judges, and it will be more and more generally realized when the progress made in art during the Chopin epoch is carefully studied."

That Elsner, Chopin's teacher, detected his pupil's originality, has already been stated. Fortunately he allowed it a free rein instead of trying to check and crush it, as teachers are in the habit of doing. But there are some passages in Chopin's early letters which seem to indicate that the general public and the professional musicians in his native Poland were not so very much in advance of the Germans in recognizing his musical genius. Liszt doubts whether Chopin's national compositions were as fully appreciated by his countrymen as the work of native poets; and Chopin writes to a friend, apropos of his second concert at Warsaw: "The *élite* of the musical world will be there; but I have little confidence in

their musical judgment—Elsner of course excepted." Elsewhere he complains of a patriotic admirer who had written that the Poles would some day be as proud of Chopin as the Germans were of Mozart. And when in addition to this the editor of a local paper told him he had in type a sonnet on him, Chopin was greatly alarmed, and begged him not to print it; for he knew that such homage would create envy and enemies, and he declared that after that sonnet was published he would not dare to read any longer what the papers said about him.

Chopin's want of confidence in the judgment of his countrymen showed that, after all, the national Polish element in his compositions was not the main cause why they were not rated at once at their true value. It was their novelty of form, harmonic depth and freedom of modulation, that made them for a long time caviare to the general. This was again proved when he went to Paris. Chopin was a Pole only on his mother's side, his father having been a Frenchman, who had emigrated to Poland. It might have been supposed, therefore, that there would be a French element in Chopin's genius which would make it palatable to the Parisians. But this did not prove to be the case. In the remarkable group of musicians, poets, and artists who were assembled at that time in Paris, and who mutually inspired one another—a group which included

Liszt, Meyerbeer, Hiller, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Heine, George Sand, the Countess D'Agoult, Delacroix, etc.—there were no doubt not a few who knew what a rare genius their friend Chopin was. George Sand wrote in her autobiography: "He has not been understood hitherto, and to the present day he is underestimated. Great progress will have to be made in taste and in the appreciation of music before it will be possible for Chopin's work to become popular." Heine also wrote that his favorite pianist was Chopin, "who, however," he adds, "is more of a composer than a virtuoso. When Chopin is at the piano I forget all about the technical side of playing and become absorbed in the sweet profundity, the sad loveliness of his creations, which are as deep as they are elegant. Chopin is the great inspired tone-poet who properly should be named only in company with Mozart, Beethoven, and Rossini."

But aside from these select spirits and a small circle of aristocratic admirers, mostly Poles, Chopin was not understood by the Paris public. At first he could not even make his living there, and was in consequence on the point of emigrating to America when a friend dragged him to a *soirée* at Rothschild's, where his playing was so much admired that he was at once engaged as a teacher by several ladies present. In a very short time he became the fashionable teacher in aristocratic circles, where his

refined manners made him personally liked. As he refused to take any but talented pupils, teaching was not so irksome to him as it might have been. Nevertheless one cannot but marvel at the obtuseness of the Parisians who put into the utilitarian harness an artist who might have enchanted them every evening with a concert, had their taste been more cultivated. He *did* play once, when he first arrived, but the receipts did not even meet the expenses, and the audience received his work so coldly that his artistic sensibilities were wounded, and he did not again appear in public for fourteen years. Occasionally he played for the select aristocratic circles into which he had been introduced; but even here he did not often meet with the genuine appreciation and sympathy which the artist craves. "Whoever could read in his face," says Liszt, "could see how often he felt convinced that among all these handsome, well-dressed gentlemen, among all the perfumed, elegant ladies, not one understood him."

As for the French critics they seem to have been as obtuse as their German colleagues. To give only one instance: M. Fétis, author of the well-known musical dictionary, states in his article on Chopin, that this composer is overrated to-day, and his popularity largely due to the fact that he is fashionable. And in his article on Heller, he asserts, more pointedly still, that "the time will undoubtedly come

when the world will recognize that Heller, much more than Chopin, is the modern poet of the pianoforte." In this opinion Fétis probably stands alone; but many who have not studied Chopin's deepest works carefully, are still convinced that the pianoforte compositions of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schumann, are of greater importance than Chopin's. So far am I from sharing this opinion that if I had to choose between never again hearing a pianoforte piece by any or all of those composers, or never again hearing a Chopin composition, I should decide in favor of Chopin. Some years ago I expressed my conviction, in *The Nation*, that Chopin is as distinctly superior to all other piano composers as Wagner is to all other opera composers. A distinguished Cincinnati musician, Mr. Otto Singer, was horrified at this statement, and wrote in *The Courier*, of that city, that it could only have been made by "a patriotically inclined Frenchman or a consumptive inhabitant of Poland;" adding that "he would readily yield up possession of quite a number of Chopin's bric-à-brac for Schumann's single 'Warum.'" I am neither a patriotic Frenchman nor a consumptive Pole, and I am a most ardent admirer of Schumann; nevertheless I uphold my former opinion, and my chief object in this essay is to endeavor to justify it.

All authorities, in the first place, admit that Chopin created an entirely new style of playing the piano-

forte. Many have pointed out the peculiarities of this style—the use of extended and scattered chords, the innovations in fingering which facilitate *legato* playing, the spray of dainty little ornamental notes, the use of the capricious *tempo rubato*, and so on. But it has not been made sufficiently clear by any writer how it was that Chopin became the Wagner of the pianoforte, so to speak, by revealing for the first time the infinite possibilities of varied and beautiful tone-colors inherent in that instrument. To understand this point fully, it is necessary to bear in mind a few facts regarding the history of the pianoforte.

The name of pianoforte was given about a century and a half ago to an instrument constructed by the Italian Cristofori, who devised a mechanism for striking the strings with hammers. In the older instruments—the clarichords and harpsichords—the strings were either snapped by means of crow's quills, or pushed with a tangent. The new hammer action not only brought a better tone out of the string, but enabled the pianist to play any note loud or soft at pleasure; hence the name *piano-forte*. But the pianoforte itself required many years before all its possibilities of tone-production were discovered. The instruments used by Mozart still had a thin short tone, and there was no pedal for prolonging it, except a clumsy one worked with the knee—

a circumstance which greatly influenced Mozart's style, and is largely responsible for the fact that his pianoforte works are hardly ever played to-day in the concert hall. For, as the tone could not be sustained, it was customary in Mozart's time to hide its meagre frame by means of a great profusion of runs and trills, and other ornaments, with which even the slow movements were disfigured. Under the circumstances, these ornaments were justifiable to some extent, but to-day they seem not only in bad taste, but entirely superfluous, because our improved instruments have a much greater power of sustaining tones.

Czerny, the famous piano teacher, touched in his autobiography on the peculiarities of Mozart's style. Beethoven, who gave Czerny some lessons on the piano, made him pay particular attention to the *legato*, "of which," says Czerny, "he was so unrivalled a master, but which at that time—the Mozart period, when the short staccato touch was in fashion —*all other pianists thought impossible.* Beethoven told me afterwards," he continues, "that he had often heard Mozart, whose style from his use of the clavecin, the pianoforte being in his time in its infancy, was not at all adapted to the newer instrument. I have known several persons who had received instruction from Mozart, and their playing corroborated this statement."

In view of these facts, we can understand why Beethoven did not like Mozart's pianoforte works as well as those of Clementi, in which there was more *cantabile*, and which required more fulness of tone in the execution; and we can understand why even so conservative a critic as Louis Ehlert should exclaim, apropos of Chopin's "entirely new pianoforte life," "How uninteresting is the style of any previous master (excepting Beethoven) compared with his! What a litany of gone-by, dead-alive forms! What a feelingless, prosaic jingle! If anyone should, without a grimace, assure me sincerely that he can play pianoforte pieces by Clementi, Dussek, Hummel, and Ries, with real enjoyment even now, I will esteem him as an excellent man—yes, a very honest one; but I will not drink wine with him."

Were it not for what I have ventured to call the fetish of Jumboism, I am convinced that Professor Ehlert would have written Mozart's name in this last sentence in place of Clementi's. By excepting Beethoven alone from the list of "uninteresting" composers preceding Chopin, he *implicitly* condemns Mozart; but he does not dare to do so *explicitly*, although such a confession would not have affected Mozart's greatness in other departments of music, which is undeniable. Indeed, if Professor Ehlert had been perfectly sincere I am not quite sure that he would have excepted Beethoven's sona-

tas. Although they teem with great and beautiful ideas, these sonatas are not really adapted to the intrinsic nature of the pianoforte, and hence fail to arouse the enthusiasm of those whose taste has been formed by the works of Chopin and Schumann. It was no doubt an instinctive antipathy to Beethoven's unpianistic style (if the adjective be permissible), which prevented Chopin from admiring Beethoven as deeply as he did some other composers, whom he would have admitted to be his inferiors. And Beethoven himself does not seem to have regarded his pianoforte works with the same satisfaction as his other compositions. At least, he wrote the following curious sentence in a corner of one of his sketch books in 1805; "Heaven knows why my pianoforte music always makes the worst impression on me, especially when it is played badly." He must have felt that his ideas found a much more appropriate and adequate expression in the orchestra than on the piano. Not being a radical innovator he did not, in his treatment of the pianoforte, go beyond Clementi; and so it remained for Chopin to show the world that the pianoforte, if properly treated, will yield tones whose exquisite sensuous beauty can hardly be surpassed by any combination of orchestral instruments.

The two principal means by which he accomplished these reforms were the constant employment

of the pedal, and the use of extended and scattered chords, in place of the crowded harmonies and the massive movements of the older accompaniments.

Very few pianists seem to comprehend the exact function and importance of the pedal. Many will be surprised to hear that the word "touch," which they suppose refers to the way the keys are struck by the fingers, has quite as much to do with the feet—that is, the use of the pedal—as with the fingers. No matter how thoroughly a pianist may have trained his fingers, if he does not use the pedal as it was used by Chopin and Schumann, he cannot reveal the poetry of their compositions. In one of his letters Chopin notes that Thalberg played *forte* and *piano* with the pedals, not with his hands, and some piano bangers do so still; but every pianist who deserves the name knows that loudness and softness must be regulated by the hands (and very rarely the left-side pedal). Yet even among this better class of pianists the notion seems to prevail that the main object of the right-side pedal is to enable them to prolong a chord or to prevent a confusion of consecutive harmonies. This is one of the functions of the pedal, no doubt, but not the most important one. The chief service of the pedal is *in the interest of tone-color*. Let me explain.

Every student of music knows that if you sing a certain tone into a piano (after pressing the pedal),

or before a guitar, the strings in these instruments which correspond to the tone you sing will vibrate responsively and emit a tone. He also knows that when you sound a single note, say G, on the violin or piano, you seem to hear only a simple tone, but on listening more closely you will find that it is really a compound tone or a complete chord, the fundamental tone being accompanied by faint overtones, which differ in number and relative loudness in different instruments, and to which these instruments owe their peculiar tone-color.

Now when you press the pedal of a pianoforte on striking a note you do not only prolong this note, but its vibrations arouse all the notes which correspond to its overtones, and the result is a rich deep tone-color of exquisite sensuous beauty and enchanting variableness. Hence, whenever the melodic movement and harmonic changes are not too rapid, a pianist should press the pedal *constantly*, whether he plays loudly or softly; because it is only when the damper is raised from the strings that the overtones can enrich and beautify the sound by causing their corresponding strings to vibrate in sympathy with them. Those who heard Schumann play say that he used the pedal persistently, sometimes twice in the same bar to avoid harmonic confusion; and the same is true of Chopin, concerning whose playing an English amateur says, after referring to his

legatissimo touch: "The wide arpeggios in the left hand, *maintained in a continuous stream of tone* by the strict legato and fine and constant use of the damper pedal, formed an harmonious substructure for a wonderfully poetic *cantabile.*"

I have italicised and emphasized the words *maintained in a continuous stream of tone,* because it calls attention to one of the numerous resemblances between the style of Chopin and that of Wagner, who in his music dramas similarly keeps up an uninterrupted flow of richly colored harmonies to sustain the vocal part. Schumann relates that he had the good fortune to hear Chopin play some of his études. "And he played them very much *à la Chopin,*" he says: "Imagine an Æolian harp provided with all the scales, commingled by an artist's hand into all manner of fantastic, ornamental combinations, yet in such a way that you can always distinguish a deeper ground tone and a sweet continuous melody above—and you have an approximate idea of his playing. No wonder that I liked best those of the études which he played for me, and I wish to mention specially the first one, in A flat major, a poem rather than an étude. It would be a mistake to imagine that he allowed each of the small notes to be distinctly audible; it was rather a surging of the A flat major chord, occasionally raised to a new billow by the pedal; but amid these

harmonies a wondrous melody asserted itself in large tones, and only once, toward the middle of the piece, a tenor part came out prominently beside the principal melody. After hearing this étude you feel as you do when you have seen a ravishing picture in your dreams and, half awake, would fain recall it."

Now it is obvious that such dreamy Æolian-harp-like harmonies could not have been produced without Chopin's novel and constant use of the pedal. And this brings out the greatest difference between the new and the old style of playing. In the pianoforte works of Mozart and Beethoven, and even in those of Weber, which mark the transition from the classical to the romantic school, there are few passages that absolutely require a pedal, and in most cases the pieces sound almost as well without as with pedal ; so that, from his point of view, and in his days of staccato playing, Hummel was quite right in insisting that a pianist could not be properly judged until he played without the pedal. But as regards the romantic school of Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and their followers, it may be said with equal truth that a pianist's use of the pedal furnishes the supreme test of his talent. If he has not the delicacy of ear which is requisite to produce the " continuous stream of tone " in Chopin's compositions, without the slightest harmonic confusion, he should

leave them alone and devote himself to less poetic composers.

An amusing anecdote illustrates visibly how helpless Chopin would have been without his pedal. He was asked one evening at a party in Paris to play. He was quite willing to do so but discovered to his surprise that the piano had no pedals. They had been sent away for repairs. In this dilemma a happy thought occurred to Liszt, who happened to be present. He crawled under the piano, and, while Chopin was playing, worked the mechanism to which the pedals ought to have been attached so cleverly that they were not missed at all! He stooped that his friend might conquer.

The fact that Chopin in his later works, often omitted the sign for the pedal on his MSS. must not be held to indicate that he did not wish it to be constantly used. In his earlier works he carefully indicated where it should be employed, but subsequently he appears to have reasoned rightly that a pianist who needs to be told where the pedal ought, and where it ought not, to be employed, is not sufficiently advanced in culture to play his works at all, and had therefore best leave them alone.

Chopin's remarkable genius for divining the mysteries of the pianoforte enabled him, as it were, to anticipate what is a comparatively recent invention —the middle pedal which is chiefly used to sustain

single tones in the bass without affecting the rest of the instrument. The melancholy "F sharp minor Prelude," for example, cannot be played properly without the use of this middle pedal. In another prelude, we have an illustration of how the pedal must often be used in order to help in forming a chord which cannot be stretched. And this brings us to the second important innovation in the treatment of Chopin's pianoforte—the constant use of scattered and extended chords.

Karasovski relates that Chopin, a mere boy, used to amuse himself by searching on the piano for harmonies of which the constituent notes were widely scattered on the keyboard, and, as his hands were too small to grasp them, he devised a mechanism for stretching his hands, which he wore at night. Fortunately, he did not go so far as Schumann, who made similar experiments with his hands and thereby disabled one of them for life. What prompted Chopin to search for these widely extended chords was his intense appreciation of tonal beauty. Today everybody knows how much more beautiful scattered, and widely extended harmonies are than crowded harmonies; but it was Chopin's genius that discovered this fact and applied it on a large scale. Indeed, so novel were his chords, that at first, many of them were deemed unplayable; but he showed that if his own system of fingering was

adopted, they were not only playable, but eminently suited to the character of the instrument. The superior beauty of scattered intervals can be strikingly demonstrated in this way. If you strike four or five adjacent notes on the piano at once, you produce an intolerable cacophony. But these same notes can be so arranged by scattering them that they make an exquisite chord in suspension. Everything depends on the arrangement and the wideness of the intervals. Chopin's fancy was inexhaustible in the discovery of new kinds of scattered chords, combined into harmony by his novel use of the pedal; and in this way he enriched music with so many new harmonies and modulations that he must be placed, as a harmonic innovator, on a level with Bach and Wagner.

These remarks apply especially to Chopin's later compositions; but his peculiarities are already distinctly traceable in many of his earlier works; and Elsner, his teacher, was sufficiently clear-sighted and frank to write the following words: "The achievements of Mozart and Beethoven as pianists have long been forgotten; and their pianoforte compositions, although undoubtedly classical works, must give way to the diversified artistic treatment of that instrument by the modern school." Mr. Joseph Bennett quotes this sentence in his Biography of Chopin, and adds an exclamation point in brack-

ets after it, to express his surprise. Mr. Bennett is considered one of the leading London critics; yet I must say that I have never seen so much ignorance in a single exclamation point in brackets. Note the difference between Elsner and Bennett. Elsner adds to the sentence just quoted, that the *other* works of Mozart and Beethoven—their symphonies, operas, quartets, etc., "will not only continue to live, but will, perhaps, remain unequalled by anything of the present day." This is genuine discriminative criticism, which renders unto Cæsar what is Cæsar's due: whereas, Mr. Bennett is guided by the vicious old habit of fancying that because Mozart and Beethoven are great masters, therefore they must be superior to everybody in everything. Is it not about time to put an end to this absurd Jumboism in music?

The fact is, we are living in an age of division of labor and specialism; and those who, like Robert Franz and Richard Wagner, devote themselves to a single branch of music have a better chance of reaching the summit of Parnassus than those who dissipate their energies in too many directions. Chopin was the pianoforte genius *par excellence*, and in his field he stands above the greatest of the German composers, whatever their names. Mendelssohn once wrote to his mother that Chopin "produces effects on the piano as novel as those of Paganini on the

violin, and he performs marvels which no one would have believed to be possible." Mendelssohn benefited to a slight extent by Chopin's example, but he did not add anything new to the treatment of the pianoforte. Nor does even Liszt mark an advance on Chopin from a purely pianistic point of view. Paradoxical as it may seem, Liszt, the greatest pianist the world has known, was really a born *orchestral* composer. He was never satisfied with the piano, but constantly wanted to convert it into an orchestra. His innovations were all in the service of these orchestral aspirations, and hence it is that his rhapsodies, for example, are much more effective in their orchestral garb than in their original pianoforte version. The same is true of many of Rubinstein's pianoforte works—the Bal Masqué, for instance, which always has such an electric effect on Mr. Theodore Thomas's audiences. Not so with Chopin. Liszt remarks, somewhere, that Chopin might have easily written for orchestra, because his compositions can be so readily arranged for it. I venture to differ from this opinion. Chopin's Funeral March has been repeatedly arranged for orchestra—first by Reber at Chopin's funeral (when Meyerbeer regretted that he had not been asked to do this labor of love); and more recently by Mr. Theodore Thomas. Mr. Thomas's version is very clever and effective, yet I very *much* prefer this sublime

dirge on the piano. In a small room the piano has almost as great a capacity for dynamic shading as the orchestra has in a large hall; and, as I have just pointed out, one who knows how to use the pedal can secure an endless (almost orchestral) variety of tone-colors on the piano, thanks to the hundreds of overtones which can be made to accompany the tones played. Chopin spoke the language of the piano. His pieces are so idiomatic that they cannot be translated into orchestral language any more than Heine's lyrics can be translated into English. Chopin exhausted the possibilities of the pianoforte, and the piano exhausts the possibilities of Chopin's compositions.

The innovations of Chopin which I have so far alluded to, have been to some extent adopted by all modern composers, and the more they have adopted them the more their works ingratiate themselves in the favor of amateurs. But there is another epoch-making feature of Chopin's style, which is less easy, especially to Germans, because it is a Slavic characteristic; I mean the *tempo rubato*. This is a phrase much used among musicians, but if pressed for an exact definition, few would be able to give one. Let us see first what Chopin's contemporaries have to say of the way in which he himself treats it. Chopin visited England in 1848, and on June 21 gave a concert in London. Mr. Chorley, the well-known critic,

wrote a criticism on this occasion for "The Athenæum," in which he says: "The delicacy of M. Chopin's tone and the elasticity of his passages are delicious to the ear. He makes a free use of *tempo rubato*, leaning about within his bars more than any player we recollect, but still subject to a presiding sentiment of measure, such as presently habituates the ear to the liberties taken. In music not his own, we happen to know he can be as staid as a metronome; while his Mazurkas, etc., lose half that wildness if played without a certain freedom and license—impossible to imitate, but irresistible if the player at all feels the music. This we have always fancied while reading Chopin's works:—we are now sure of it after hearing him perform them."

Moscheles wrote to his wife that Chopin's "*ad libitum* playing, which, with the interpreters of his music degenerates into offences against correct time, is, in his own case, merely a pleasing originality of style." He compares him to "a singer who, little concerned with the accompaniment, follows entirely his feelings." Karasovski says that Chopin "played the bass in quiet, regular time, while the right hand moved about with perfect freedom, now following the left hand, now . . . going its own independent way. 'The left hand,' said Chopin, 'must be like an orchestral conductor; not for a moment must it be uncertain and vacillating.'" Thus his

playing, free from the fetters of *tempo*, acquired a unique charm; thanks to this *rubato*, his melody was "like a vessel rocked upon the waves of the sea."

The world suffered a great loss when a band of ignorant soldiers found the bundles of letters which Chopin had written from Paris to his parents, and used them to feed the fire which cooked their supper. But it lost a still greater treasure when Chopin tore up the manuscript of his pianoforte method, which he began to write in the last years of his life, but never finished. In it he would no doubt have given many valuable hints regarding the correct use of the *rubato*. In the absence of other authentic hints beyond the one just quoted, Liszt must be depended upon as the best authority on the subject; for it is well known that Liszt could imitate Chopin so nicely that his most intimate friends were once deceived in a dark room, imagining that Chopin was playing when Liszt was at the piano. "Chopin," Liszt writes, "was the first who introduced into his compositions that peculiarity which gave such a unique color to his impetuosity, and which he called *tempo rubato*:—an irregularly interrupted movement, subtile, broken, and languishing, at the same time flickering like a flame in the wind, undulating, like the surface of a wheat-field, like the tree-tops moved by a breeze." All his compositions must be played

in this peculiarly accented, spasmodic, insinuating style, a style which he succeeded in imparting to his pupils, but which can hardly be taught without example. As with the pedal, so with the *rubato*, Chopin often neglected to mark its use in later years, taking it for granted that those who understood his works would know where to apply it.

Perhaps the importance of the *rubato* in Chopin cannot be more readily realized than by his concession that he could never play a Viennese waltz properly, and by the fact that sometimes, when he was in a jocular mood, he would play one of his mazurkas in strict, metronomic time, to the great amusement of those who had heard him play them properly.

When Liszt speaks of the *tempo rubato* as a unique characteristic of Chopin's style, he must not be understood too literally. As a matter of fact, the *rubato* is too important an element of expression not to have been partially anticipated in the works of some of Chopin's predecessors, just as Wagner's leading motives had imperfect prototypes in the works of some preceding composers. As early as 1602, the Italian, Caccini, describes what he calls the "Stile Nobile, in which the singer," he says, "emancipates himself from the fetters of the measure, by prolonging or diminishing the duration of a note by one-half, according as the sense of the word requires it." But it is probable that the Italian singers of

that period, as to-day, used this kind of *rubato* merely to display the beauty of their voice on a loud high note, and not, like Chopin, for the sake of emphasizing a pathetic or otherwise expressive note or chord.

Of the Germans it may be said that, as a rule, they had, until recently, no special liking for the *tempo rubato.* Dr. Hanslick, the eminent Viennese critic, referred to it thirty years ago, as "a morbid unsteadiness of *tempo.*" Mendelssohn, who always liked a "nice, swift *tempo,*" repeatedly expressed his aversion to Chopin's *rubato.* Nevertheless, traces of it may be found in the rhythms of the classical school. Although Mozart's *tempo* in general was as strict and uniform as that of a waltz in the ball-room, in playing an adagio he appears to have allowed his left hand some freedom of movement for the sake of expression (see Jahn I., 134). Beethoven, according to Seyfried, "was very particular at rehearsals about the frequent passages in *tempo rubato;*" and there are other remarks by contemporaries of Beethoven which indicate that although he wrote in the classical style, in his playing and conducting he often introduced a romantic *rubato.* Still, in the majority of his compositions, there is no room for the *rubato,* which cannot be said to have found a home in German music till it was assimilated by the Schumann school, under the in-

fluence of Chopin. Since then, it has leavened the spirit of modern music in a manner which has never been sufficiently emphasized. I am convinced that even Richard Wagner was, unconsciously, influenced by it through Liszt; for one of the chief peculiarities of his style is a sort of dramatic *rubato* which emancipates his music from the tyranny of the strict dance measure. In his essay on the proper interpretation of Tannhäuser, Wagner declares that the division of music into regular measures, or bars, is merely a mechanical means for enabling the composer to convey his ideas to the singer. As soon as the singer has grasped the idea, he says, the bar should be thrown aside as a useless incumbrance, and the singer, ignoring strict time, should be guided by his feelings alone, while the conductor should follow and preserve harmony between him and the orchestra.

It might be said that this dramatic *rubato* is something different from Chopin's *rubato*. *Rubato* literally means "robbed," and it is generally supposed that the peculiarity of Chopin's style consisted simply in this, that he prolonged certain notes in a bar at the expense of the others—robbing from one what he gave to his neighbor. But this is a very inadequate conception of the term. Chopin's *rubato* means much more than this. It includes, to a large extent, the frequent unexpected changes of

time and rhythm, together with the *ritardandos* and *accelerandos*. It includes, secondly, those unique passages, first conceived by Chopin, where the right hand has to play irregular groups of small notes—say twenty-two, while the left hand plays only twelve ; or nineteen, while the left plays four—passages in which Chopin indicated as clearly as Wagner did in the words just quoted that the musical bar is a mere mechanical measure which does not sufficiently indicate the phrasing of the romantic or dramatic ideas that lie beyond the walls of a dance-hall.

There is a third peculiarity of Chopin's style which may be included under the name of *rubato*, namely, his habit of "robbing" the note, not of its duration, but its *accent*. Every student of music knows that the symphony and sonata are called "idealized dance forms," because they are direct outgrowths of the dances that were cultivated originally in Italy, France, and Germany. Now, one peculiarity of these dances is the fact that the accent always falls on the first beat of each bar. This is very appropriate and convenient for dancing, but from an artistic point of view, it is decidedly monotonous. Hence, Chopin conferred a vast benefit on modern art by introducing the spirit of Slavic music, in which the accent often falls on other beats beside the first. These regular accents produce the effect of the va-

riable *tempo rubato*, and it is to them that Chopin's works largely owe their exotic, poetic color. As they open up new possibilities of emotional expression, they have been eagerly appropriated by other composers and have leavened all modern music. To Chopin, therefore, chiefly belongs the honor of having emancipated music from the monotony of the Western European dance-beat by means of the *tempo rubato* in its varied aspects.

But, it was not merely in the accent of the dance forms, that he introduced an agreeable innovation; he was one of the giants who helped to create a new epoch in art, by breaking these old forms altogether, and substituting new ones better suited to modern tastes. And here we come across one of the most ludicrous misconceptions which have been fostered concerning Chopin by shallow critics, and which brings us back again for a moment to the question of Jumboism. I do not know whether he was a German or a French critic who first wrote that Chopin, although great in short pieces, was not great enough to master the sonata form. Once in print, this silly opinion was repeated parrot-like by scores of other critics. *How* silly it is may be inferred from the fact that such third-rate composerlings as Herz and Hummel were able to write sonatas of the most approved pattern—and that, in fact, *any* person with the least musical talent can

learn in a few years to write sonatas that are absolutely correct as regards form. And yet we are asked to believe that Chopin, one of the most profound and original musical thinkers the world has ever seen, could not write a correct sonata! *Risum teneatis amici!* Chopin not able to master the sonata form? The fact is, *the sonata form could not master him.* He felt instinctively that it was too artificial to serve as a vehicle for the expression of poetic thought; and his thoroughly original genius therefore created the more plastic and malleable shorter forms which have since been adopted by composers the world over. The few sonatas which Chopin wrote do not deviate essentially from the orthodox structure, but one feels constantly that he was hampered in his movements by the artificial structure. Though they are full of genius, like everything he composed, he did not write them *con amore.* Concentration is one of Chopin's principal characteristics, and the sonata favors diffuseness. Too much thematic beating out is the bane of the sonata. A few bars of gold are worth more than many square yards of gold leaf; and Chopin's bars are solid gold. Moreover, there is no organic unity between the different parts of the sonata, whatever may have been said to the contrary. The essentially artificial character of the sonata is neatly illustrated by a simile used by Dr. Hanslick in speaking

of Chopin. "This composer," he said, "although highly and peculiarly gifted, was never able to unite the fragrant flowers which he scattered by handfuls, into beautiful wreaths." Dr. Hanslick intends this as censure. I regard it as the greatest compliment he could have paid him. A wreath may be very pretty in its way, but it is artificial. The flowers are crushed and their fragrance does not blend. How much lovelier is a single violet or orchid in the fields, unhampered by strings and wires, and connected solely with its stalk and the surrounding green leaves. Many of Chopin's compositions are so short that they can hardly be likened unto flowers, but only to buds. Yet is not a rosebud a thousand times more beautiful than a full-blown rose?

One more consideration. The psychology of the sonata form is false. Men and women do not feel happy for ten minutes as in the opening allegro of a sonata, then melancholy for another ten minutes, as in the following adagio, then frisky, as in the scherzo, and finally, fiery and impetuous for ten minutes as in the finale. The movements of our minds are seldom so systematic as this. Sad and happy thoughts and moods chase one another incessantly and irregularly, as they do in the compositions of Chopin, which, therefore, are much truer echoes of our modern romantic feelings than the

stiff and formal classical sonatas. And thus it is, that Chopin's habitual neglect of the sonata form, instead of being a defect, reveals his rare artistic subtlety and grandeur. It was natural that a Pole should vindicate for music this emotional freedom of movement, for the Slavic mind is especially prone to constant changes of mood. Nevertheless, as soon as Chopin had shown the way, other composers followed eagerly in the new path, and in the present day the sonata may be regarded as obsolete. Few contemporary composers have written more than one or two—merely in order to show that they can do so if they want to; and even Brahms, the high priest of the conservatives, has, in his later period, devoted himself more and more exclusively to shorter modern forms in his pianoforte music.

Strictly speaking, Chopin was not the first who tried to get away from the sonata. Beethoven, though he remained faithful to it, felt its fetters, as is shown by his numerous poetic licenses. Schubert wrote "Moments Musicals," Mendelssohn, "Songs without Words," Weber, Polonaises, and Field, Nocturnes. But these were merely straws which indicated in which direction Chopin's genius would sweep the field and clear the musical atmosphere. His polonaises and nocturnes are vastly superior to those of Weber and Field; and his poetic preludes, his romantic ballads, his lovely ber-

çeuse, his amorous mazurkas, are new types in art which have often been imitated but never equalled. Only in one field did Chopin have a dangerous rival among his predecessors, namely, in the Waltz. Weber's "Invitation to the Dance" is the source of the modern idealized waltz, because it was not written for the feet alone, but also for the heart and the imagination. Like Chopin's waltzes, it contains chivalrous passages, amorous episodes, and subtle changes of movement. And it seems as if the fact that there was less room for formal and emotional innovations in the waltz than in the other forms, had somewhat affected Chopin's imagination. For, although the most popular of his works, his waltzes are, with a few exceptions in which the *rubato* prevails, less characteristic than his other pieces. Nevertheless, they are charming, every one of them. But they are fairy dances—mortals are too clumsy to keep time to them.

Next to the waltzes in popularity come the polonaises; and they fully deserve their popularity. Liszt has given us a charming description of the polonaise as it was formerly danced in Chopin's native country. It was less a dance than a promenade in which courtly pomps and aristocratic splendor were on exhibition. It was a chivalrous but not an amorous dance, precedence being given to age and rank, before youth and beauty. And whereas, in

other dances, the place of honor is always given to the fair sex, in the polonaise the men are in the foreground. In a word, the polonaise represents, both in its subject and the style of music, the masculine side of Chopin's genius.

The feminine side is chiefly embodied in the mazurkas and the nocturnes. It has been said that the highest genius must combine masculine with feminine traits, and it is a remarkable fact that the works of two of the most spontaneous composers—Chopin and Schubert—are often characterized by an exquisite feminine tenderness and grace; as if, seeing that women have not done their duty as composers, they had tried to introduce the feminine spirit in music. Yet it is unfair to place too much emphasis on this side of their genius. In their bolder moments, Chopin and Schubert are thoroughly masculine.

It seems strange at first sight that the mazurkas, these exquisite love poems, should be so much less popular than the waltzes, for they are quite as melodious and much easier—although here, as elsewhere, Chopin often introduces a few very difficult bars in an otherwise easy composition, as if to keep away bunglers. Perhaps the cause of their comparative neglect is, that they are so thoroughly Polish in spirit; unless they are played with an exotic *rubato*, their fragrance vanishes. There is more

local color in the mazurkas than in any of his other works. The Mazurs are musically a highly gifted nation, and Chopin was impressed early in life with the quaint originality of their melodies. No doubt some of his mazurkas are merely artistic settings of these old love songs, but they are the settings of an inspired jeweller. If we can judge by the number of pieces of each class that he wrote, the mazurka was Chopin's favorite form. Even on his death-bed he wrote one. It was his last effort, and he was too weak to try it over on the piano. It is of heart-rending sadness, and exquisite pathos. Perhaps it was a patriotic rather than an æsthetic feeling which led him thus to favor the mazurka. His love for his country was exceeded only by his devotion to his art. "Oh, how sad it must be to die in a foreign country," he wrote to a friend in 1830; and when, soon afterward, he left home he took along a handful of Polish soil which he kept for nineteen years. Shortly before his death he expressed a wish that it should be strewn in his coffin—a wish which was fulfilled; so that his body rested on Polish soil even in Paris.

A countless number of exquisite melodic rhythmic and harmonic details in the mazurkas might be dwelt upon in this place, but I will only call attention to the inexhaustible variety of ideas which makes each of them so unique, notwithstanding

their strong family likeness. They are like fantastic orchids, or like the countless varieties of humming birds, those "winged poems of the air," of which no two are alike while all resemble each other.

The nocturnes represent the dreamy side of Chopin's genius. They are sufficiently popular, yet few amateurs have any idea of their unfathomable depth, and few know how to use the pedal in such a way as to produce the rich uninterrupted flow of tone on which the melody should float. Most pianists play them too fast. Mozart and Schumann protested against the tendency to take their slow pieces too fast, and Chopin suffers still more from this pernicious habit. Mendelssohn in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and Weber in "Oberon," have given us glimpses of dreamland, but Chopin's nocturnes take us there bodily, and plunge us into reveries more delicious than the visions of an opium eater. They should be played in the twilight and in solitude, for the slightest foreign sound breaks the spell. But just as dreams are sometimes agitated and dramatic, so some of these nocturnes are complete little dramas with stormy, tragic episodes, and the one in C sharp minor, *e.g.*, embodies a greater variety of emotion and more genuine dramatic spirit on four pages than many popular operas on four hundred.

One of Chopin's enchanting innovations, which he

introduced frequently in the nocturnes, consists in those unique and exquisite *fioriture*, or dainty little notes which suddenly descend on the melody like a spray of dew drops glistening in all the colors of the rainbow. No less unique and original are the exquisite modulations into foreign keys which abound in the nocturnes, as, indeed, in all his works. Schucht calls attention to the fact that in his very opus 1 Chopin permits himself a freedom of modulation which Beethoven rarely indulged in. But this is a mere trifle compared with the works of his last period. Here we find a striking originality and boldness of modulation that has no parallel in music, except in Wagner's last music-dramas. Now we have seen that Moscheles, and other contemporaries of Chopin, found his modulations harsh and disagreeable; and doubtless there are amateurs to-day who regard them in the same way. It seems, indeed, as if musical people must be divided into two classes—those who find their chief delight in melody pure and simple, and those who think that rich and varied harmony is the soul of music. Chopin fortunately wrote for both classes. Italy has produced no melodist equal to him, and Germany only one—Franz Schubert. No one has written melodies more soulful than those of the nocturne, opus 37, No. 2, the second ballad, the études, opus 10, No. 3; opus 25, No. 7, etc. I distinctly remember the thrill

with which I heard each of these melodies for the first time ; but it was a deeper emotion still which I felt when I played for the first time the sublimest of his nocturnes—the last but one he wrote—and came across that wonderful modulation from five sharps to four flats, and, later on, the delicious series of modulations in the fourth and fifth bars after the Tempo Primo. I realized then that modulation is a deeper source of emotional expression than melody.

In speaking of Chopin's melancholy character, the nocturnes are often referred to as illustrations of it. They do, indeed, breathe a spirit of sadness, but the majority represent, as I have said, the dreamy side of his genius. The real anguish of his heart is not expressed in the nocturnes but in the preludes and études, strange as these names may seem for such pathetic effusions of his heart. The étude, opus 10, No. 6, seems as if it were in a sort of double minor ; as much sadder than ordinary minor, as ordinary minor is sadder than major. Chopin had abundant cause to be melancholy. He inherited that national melancholy of the Poles which causes them even to dance to tunes in minor keys, and which is commonly attributed to the long-continued political oppression under which they have suffered. But, apart from this national trait, Chopin had sufficient personal reasons for writing the

greater part of his mazurkas and his other pieces in minor keys. Like other men of genius, he keenly felt the anguish of not being fully appreciated by his contemporaries. Moreover, although he was greatly admired by the French and Polish women in Paris, and was even conceded a lady-killer, he was, in his genuine affairs of the heart, thrice disappointed. His first love, who wore his engagement ring when he left Warsaw, proved faithless to the absent lover, and married another man. The second love deceived him in the same way, preferring a Count to a genius. And his third love, George Sand, after apparently reciprocating his attachment, for a few years, not only discarded him, but tried to justify her conduct to the world, by giving an exaggerated portraiture of his weaknesses, in her novel "Lucrezia Floriani."

Nevertheless, it was in one respect fortunate for the world that George Sand was Chopin's friend so long, for we owe to her facile pen many interesting accounts of Chopin's habits and the origin of some of his compositions. The winter which he spent with her on the Island of Majorca was one of the most important in his life, for it was here that he composed some of those masterpieces, his preludes —a word which might be paraphrased as Introductions to a new world of musical emotion. There is a strange discrepancy in the accounts which Liszt

and George Sand give of the Majorca episode in Chopin's life. Liszt describes it as a period of calm enjoyment, George Sand as one of discomfort and distress. As she was an eye-witness, her testimony appears the more trustworthy, especially as it is borne out by the character of the preludes which he composed there. There are among Chopin's preludes a few which breathe the spirit of contentment and grace, or of religious grandeur, but most of them are outbreaks of the wildest anguish and heart-rending pathos. If tears could be heard, they would sound like these preludes. Two of the saddest—those in B minor and E minor—were played by the famous organist Lefebure Wely, at Chopin's funeral services. But it is useless to specify. They are all jewels of the first water.

Some years ago I wrote in "The Nation" that if all pianoforte music in the world were to be destroyed, excepting one collection, my vote should be cast for Chopin's preludes. If anything could induce me to modify that opinion to-day, it would be the thought of Chopin's études. I would never consent to their loss. Louis Ehlert, speaking of Chopin's F Major ballad, says he has seen even children stop in their play and listen to it enraptured. But, in the études I mentioned a moment ago, there are melodies which, I should think, would tempt even angels to leave their happy home and indulge, for a mo-

ment, in the luxury of idealized human sorrow. There is in these twenty-seven études, as in the twenty-five preludes, an inexhaustible wealth of melody, modulation, poetry and passion. One can play them every day and never tire of them. Of most of them one might say what Schumann said of one—that they are "poems rather than studies;" and much surprise has been expressed that Chopin should have chosen such a modest and apparently inappropriate name for them as "studies." Now, I have a theory on this subject: I believe it was partly an ironic intention which induced Chopin to call some of his most inspired pieces "studies." Pianists have always been too much in the habit of looking at their art from purely technical or mechanical points of view. They looked for mere five-finger exercises in Chopin's études, and finding at the same time an abundance of musical ideas, they were surprised. It did not occur to them that Chopin might have intended them also as studies in musical composition—studies in melody, harmony, rhythm and emotional expression. I believe he did so intend them; and finding that his contemporaries did not take his idea, he probably laughed in his sleeve, and exclaimed, "*O tempora!*"

This conjecture seems the more plausible, from the fact that there was a pronounced ironic and comic vein in Chopin's character. The accounts of

his melancholy, in fact, like those of his ill-health, have been too much exaggerated. He was often in a cheerful mood. Sometimes he would amuse himself for a whole evening playing blind-man's buff with the children. As a mere child he had formed the habit of mimicking and caricaturing pianists and other distinguished men. Liszt often suffered from this mischievous habit, but he did not complain, and even seemed to enjoy it. Of Chopin's wit, two specimens may be cited. A rich Parisian one day invited him to dinner, with the intention of getting him to entertain the guests afterward. In this case, however, the host had reckoned without the guest, for, when asked to play, Chopin exclaimed, "But, my dear sir, I have eaten so little." The other instance occurs in one of his letters, where he says of the pianist Aloys Schmitt, that he was forty years old, and his compositions eighty—a *bon mot* worthy of Heine.

There was much, indeed, in common between Chopin and Heine. Nothing is more characteristic of Heine than the way in which he works up our sentimental feelings only to knock us on the head with a comic or grotesque line at the end. Similarly, Chopin, after improvising for his friends for an hour or two, would suddenly rouse them from their reveries by a *glissando*—sliding his fingers from one end of the key-board to the other. In almost all of Chopin's or Heine's poems there is this

peculiar mixture of the sad and the comic veins—even in the scherzos, which represent the gay and cheerful moods of Chopin's muse.

Another point between these two poets is their elegance of style, and their ironic abhorrence of tawdry sentimentality and commonplace. Heine is the most elegant and graceful writer of his country, and Chopin the most elegant and graceful of all composers. Not a redundant note or a meaningless bar in all his compositions. Heine owed his formal finish to French influences, but Chopin did not need them, for the Poles are as noted as the French for elegance and grace. He avoided not only the modulatory monotony of the classical school, but, especially, the commonplace endings which marred so many classical compositions. "All's well that ends well," is a rule that was generally ignored by composers till Chopin taught them its value and effect. Chopin's pen always stopped when his thoughts stopped, and he never appends a meaningless end formula as if to warn the audience that they may now put on their hats. On the contrary, some of his later compositions, especially of the last period, end with exquisite miniature poems, connected in spirit with the preceding music and yet distinct—separate inspirations. I refer, especially, to the endings of his last two nocturnes and to the final bars of the mazurka, opus 59, No. 3.

George Sand has given us a vivid sketch of Chopin's conscientiousness as a composer. "He shut himself up in his room for entire days," she says, "weeping, walking about, breaking his pen, repeating and changing a bar a hundred times, and beginning again next day with minute and desperate perseverance. He spent six weeks over a single page, only to go back and write that which he had traced at the first essay." As regards his creativeness, George Sand says that "it descended upon his piano suddenly, completely, sublimely, or it sang itself in his head during his walks, and he made haste to hear it by rushing to the instrument." I have already mentioned the fact that when he wrote his last mazurka he was too weak to try it on the piano. In one of his letters he speaks of a polonaise being ready in his head. These facts indicate that he composed mentally, although, no doubt, during the improvisations, many themes occurred to him which he remembered and utilized. When he improvised he did not watch the key-board, but generally looked at the ceiling. Already as a youth he used to be so absorbed that he forgot his meals; and, in the street, he was often so absent-minded that he very narrowly escaped being run over by a wagon. Visions of female loveliness and patriotic reminiscences inspired many of his best works. Sometimes the pictures in his mind became so vivid as to form real

hallucinations. Thus it is related that one evening when he was alone in the dark, trying over the A major polonaise which he had just completed, he saw the door open and in marched a procession of Polish knights and ladies in mediæval costumes—the same, no doubt, that his imagination had pictured while he was composing. He was so alarmed at this vision that he fled through the opposite door and did not venture to return. Another illustration of the relations between genius and insanity.

The foregoing remarks on Chopin's compositions suffice, I think, to show how absurd is the prevalent notion that he is the composer for the drawing-room, and that his pieces reflect the spirit of fashionable Parisian society. They do, perhaps, in their elegant form, but certainly not in their spirit. The frivolous aristocratic circles that heard Chopin could never have comprehended the depth of his emotional life. The pianists for them, the real drawing-room composers were Kalkbrenner, and Field, and Thalberg, with their operatic fantasias. Chopin is the composer for the few, and he is the composer *par excellence* for musicians. From him they can get more ideas, and learn more as regards form, than from anyone else, except Bach and Wagner. In comparing his last works with his first, and noting their progress, the mind tries in vain to conceive where he would have led the world had he lived

eighty instead of forty years. One thing is certain: he would have probably written more for other instruments. His pianoforte concertos belong to his early period, and betray a lack of experience in the treatment of the orchestra. But he wrote two pieces of chamber music which have never been excelled—a 'cello sonata and a trio. The 'cello sonata was the last of his larger works, and in my opinion it is superior to any of the 'cello sonatas of Mendelssohn, Brahms, and even Beethoven and Rubinstein. The trio, though an earlier work, is, like the 'cello sonata, admirably adapted to the instruments for which it is written. I once belonged to an amateur trio club. Our tastes naturally differed on many points, but in one thing we all agreed: we always closed our entertainment with this Chopin trio. It was the climax of the evening's enjoyment. Yet, only a few years ago, the leader of one of the principal chamber music organizations in New York admitted to me that he had never heard of this trio! —an incident which vividly illustrates the truth of my assertion that Chopin's genius is still far from being esteemed at its full value.

II

HOW COMPOSERS WORK

HOW COMPOSERS WORK

Forty years ago Robert Schumann complained that the musical critics had so much to say about singers and players, while the composer was almost entirely ignored. To-day this reproach could hardly be made, for although vocalists still receive perhaps a disproportionate share of attention, compositions, new and old, are also discussed at great length in the press. Nevertheless, I believe that the vast majority of those who attend an operatic performance in New York, and are delighted with "Siegfried" or "Faust," have but vague and shadowy notions as to the way in which such an opera is composed. My object here is to illustrate the way composers work, and to prove that the creating of an opera is perhaps the most difficult and marvellous achievement of the human intellect.

Professor Langhans notes, in his history of music, that in the Middle Ages, as late as Luther's time, it took two men to compose the simplest piece of music: one who conceived the melody, and the other who added the harmonic accompaniment.

The theoretical writer, Glareanus, deliberately expressed his opinion, in 1547, that it might be *possible* to unite these two functions in one person, but that one would rarely find the inventor of a melody able to work it out artistically. We have made much progress in music within these three hundred years, and to-day every composer is not only expected to invent his own harmonies and accompaniments to his melodies, but, since Wagner set the example, composers are beginning to consider it incumbent on them to write their own librettos; and, what is more remarkable, if we examine biographies of musicians carefully we find that, even *before* Wagner, not a few composers assisted in the preparation of their operatic texts; and this remark applies even to some of the Italian composers, who were proverbially careless regarding their librettos. Rossini was, perhaps, too indolent to devote much attention to his texts, and he was apt to postpone even the *musical* work to the last moment, so that he sometimes had to be locked up in his room by his friends, to enable him to finish his score by the date named in his contract. Yet it is worthy of note that during the composition of what Rossini's admirers commonly regard as his best and most characteristic work—the "Barber of Seville"—he lived in the same house with his librettist. "The admirable unity of the 'Barber,' in which a person

without previous information on the subject could scarcely say whether the words were written for the music or the music for the words, may doubtless," as Mr. Sutherland Edwards suggests, "in a great measure be accounted for by the fact that poet and musician were always together during the composition of the opera ; ready mutually to suggest and to profit by suggestions."

"Donizetti," the same writer informs us, while at the Bologna Lyceum, "occupied himself not only with music, but also with drawing, architecture, and even poetry ; and that he could turn out fair enough verses for musical purposes was shown when, many years afterward, he wrote—so rapidly that the word 'improvise' might here be used—for the benefit of a manager in distress, both words and music of a little one-act opera, called 'Il Campanello' founded on the 'Sonnette de Nuit' of Scribe. Donizetti also arranged the librettos of 'Betty' and 'The Daughter of the Regiment,' and of the last act of 'Lucia' he not only wrote the words but designed the scenes."

Concerning Verdi, Arthur Pougin says: "It is not generally known that, virtually, Verdi is himself the author of all his poems. That is to say, not only does he always choose the subject of his operas, but, in addition to that, he draws out the sketch of the libretti, indicates all the situations, constructs

them almost entirely as far as regards the general plan, brings his personages and his characters on the stage in such a way that his *collaborateur* has simply to follow his indications to bring the whole together, and to write the verses."

One of Verdi's poetic assistants was Francesco Piave, who supplied the verses for "La Traviata," "Ernani" and several other of his operas. He was, Pougin informs us, "a tolerably bad poet, quite wanting in invention," but he had the most important quality (from Verdi's point of view) "of effacing himself completely, of putting aside every kind of personal vanity and of following entirely the indications and the desires of the composer, cutting out this, paring down that, shortening or expanding at the will of the latter—giving himself up, in short, to all his exigencies, whatever they might be."

A question having arisen some years ago, as to the origin of the libretto of "Aida," the author of it, M. du Locle, wrote to a Roman paper that the first idea of the poem belongs to the celebrated Egyptologist, Mariette Bey. He adds: "I wrote the libretto, scene by scene, phrase by phrase, in French prose, at Busseto, under the eye of the maestro, who took a large share in the work. The idea of the finale of the last act, with its two stages, one above the other, belongs especially to him."

The libretto for Verdi's last work, "Otello," was

prepared by Boïto, who had previously assisted him in rearranging his "Simon Boccanegra," and who also wrote the poem of "La Gioconda" for Ponchielli. Boïto is a thorough believer in Wagner's doctrine that every composer should write his own opera books, and he followed this rule in his interesting opera "Mefistofele."

Mozart was altogether too careless in accepting librettos unworthy of his genius. Yet occasionally he took the liberty to improve the stuff that was submitted to him. As the learned librarian, Herr Pohl, remarks, "In the 'Entführung' it is interesting to observe the alterations in Bretzner's libretto which Mozart's practical acquaintance with the stage has dictated, to the author's great disgust. Indeed, *Osmin*, one of the most original characters, is entirely his own creation, at Fischer's suggestion."

Weber resembled Wagner, among other things, in the habit of carrying plans for operas in his head for many years. Thus we read that while on the look out for a subject for an opera he and Dusch hit upon "Der Freischütz," a story by Apel, then just published. At the time, however, it did not get beyond the beginning; and not till seven years later did Weber begin the work which made his reputation, a work which in Dresden, where it was first produced, has had already more than a thousand performances, and which even in London was at

one time played simultaneously at three theatres. When he finally did begin his work on the "Freischütz" the libretto he used was by another author, Herr Kind, a man of considerable dramatic ability, but who—perhaps for that very reason—was subsequently so mortified by the fact that Weber's superior genius caused his music to receive the lion's share of the public's attention, that he refused to write another libretto for him. This was unfortunate, for, as ill luck would have it, Weber fell into the hands of a Leipsic blue stocking, Wilhelmine von Chezy, whose literary gifts were not of the most brilliant order. She submitted several subjects to him, from which he selected "Euryanthe;" but her sketch proved so unsatisfactory that he altered it entirely and compelled her to work it over nine times before he was sufficiently satisfied with it to set it to music. The libretto for his last opera, "Oberon," was prepared for him in London, but the subject, as usual, was his own choice and was based on Wieland's famous poem of that name. Weber's rare artistic conscientiousness is indicated by the fact that at this time, although he felt that his end was approaching, he set to work to learn the English language in order to avoid mistakes in adapting his melodies to the accent of the words and the spirit of the text.

Having now caught a glimpse of the manner in

which the great composers find subjects for their operas, and elaborate them, with or without the assistance of poets, we may go on to consider the sources of the musical inspiration which provides appropriate melodies and harmonies for these texts. Experience shows conclusively that the most powerful stimulant of the composer's brain is *the possession of a really poetic and dramatic text.* To take only one instance—it surely cannot be a mere coincidence that the best works of four great composers—Spohr, Berlioz, Gounod, and Schumann, are based on the story of "Faust." And Schumann, in one of his private letters, indicates very clearly why his "Faust" is such an inspired composition. Speaking of a performance of this work he says: "It appeared to make a good impression—better than my 'Paradise and Peri'—no doubt in consequence of the superior grandeur of the poem which aroused *my* powers also to a greater effort."

More significant still are the words which Weber wrote to Frau von Chezy when she was writing the libretto for "Euryanthe;" which he intended to make better than all his previous works. "When you begin to elaborate the text," he wrote; "I entreat you by all that is sacred to task me with the most difficult kinds of metre, unexpected rhythms, etc., which will force my thoughts into new paths and draw them out of their hiding-places."

In one of his theoretical essays, Wagner emphasizes the value of a good poem in kindling the spark of inspiration in a composer's mind by exclaiming: "Oh, how I adore and honor Mozart because he found it impossible to compose for his 'Titus' as good music as for his 'Don Juan,' or for his 'Così fan Tutte' as good music as for 'Figaro.'" Mozart, he adds, always wrote music, but *good* music he could only write when he was inspired, and when this inspiration was supplied by a subject worthy of being wedded to his muse.

No doubt Wagner was right in maintaining that Mozart's operas contain his best music. Where among all his purely instrumental works is anything to be found as inspired as the music in the scenes where the ghostly statue nods at *Don Juan*, and subsequently where it enters his room and clutches his hand in its marble grasp? I venture to add that even Beethoven, although he is not generally regarded as an operatic composer *par excellence*, and although his fame chiefly rests on his symphonies and other instrumental works, nevertheless composed his most inspired music in connection with his one opera "Fidelio." I refer to the third "Leonora" overture, and to the music in the prison scene, where the digging of the grave is depicted in the orchestra with a realism worthy of Wagner, and where the music when *Leonora* levels

her pistol at the villain reaches a climax as thrilling as is to be found in any dramatic work, musical or literary. Obviously, it was the intensely dramatic situation which here inspired Beethoven to the grandest effort of his genius.

It has often been asserted that the best numbers in "Fidelio" were directly inspired in Beethoven by the emotional exaltation resulting from one of his unhappy love affairs. Mr. Thayer doubts this story, because he could not find anything in Beethoven's sketch-books corroborating it; but even if it should be a myth, there are many well authenticated facts which show that Beethoven, like other composers, owed many of his best ideas to the magic influence of love in stimulating his mental powers. He dedicated thirty-nine compositions to thirty-six different women, and it is well known that he was constantly falling in love, had made up his mind several times to marry, and was twice refused. Female beauty always made a deep impression on him, and Marx relates that "even in his later years he was fond of looking at pretty faces, and used to stand still in the street and gaze after them with his eyeglasses till they were out of sight; if anyone noticed this he smiled and looked confused, but not annoyed. His little Werther romance he had lived at an early age in Bonn. In Vienna, he is said to have had more than one love affair and to have

made an occasional conquest which would have been difficult if not impossible to many an Adonis."

Weber's "Freischütz" doubtless owes much of its beauty to the fact that it was written but a few months before the composer's marriage. In one of his letters to his betrothed he writes, "Yesterday I composed all the forenoon and thought of you *very often*, for I was at work on a scene of *Agatha*, in which I still cannot attain all the fire, longing, and passion that vaguely float before me." And his son testifies that Weber's love influenced all his work at the time. "It was the reason," he says, "that Weber took to heart, above everything else, the part of *Aennchen*, in which he saw an embodiment of his bride's special talent and characteristics, and it was under the fostering stimulus of this warm feeling that he allowed those parts of the opera in which *Aennchen* appears to ripen first. The first note which he wrote down for the 'Freischütz' belongs in the duo between *Aennchen* and *Agatha*." He adds that his father, while composing, actually saw his bride in his mind's eye, and heard her sing his melodies, and accordingly as this imaginary vocalist nodded approval or shook her head, he was led to retain or reject certain musical ideas.

Schumann's letters contain a superabundance of evidence showing how love suggested to him immortal musical thoughts. "I have discovered," he writes to

his bride, "that nothing transports the imagination so readily as expectation and longing for something, as was again the case during the last few days, when I was awaiting a letter from you, and meanwhile composed whole volumes—strange, curious, solemn things—how you will open your eyes when you play them. Indeed, I am at present so full of musical ideas that I often feel as if I should explode." This was in 1838, two years before his marriage. "Schumann himself admits," as Professor Spitta remarks, "that his compositions for the piano written during the period of his courtship reveal much of his personal experiences and feelings, and his creative work of 1840 is of a very striking character. In this single year he wrote over a hundred songs, the best he ever gave to the world, and," as Professor Spitta continues, "when we look through the words of his songs, it is clear that here, more than anywhere, love was the prompter—love that had endured so long a struggle, and at last attained the goal of its desires. This is confirmed by the 'Myrthen,' which he dedicated to the lady of his choice, and the twelve songs from Rückert's 'Springtime of Love'—which were written conjointly by the two lovers."

The gay and genial Haydn appears to have been as great a favorite of women as Beethoven, and he doubtless owed some of his inspirations to their in-

fluence upon his susceptible heart. "He always considered himself an ugly man," Herr Pohl writes, "and could not understand how so many handsome women fell in love with him; 'at any rate,' he used to say, 'they were not tempted by my beauty,' though he admitted that he liked looking at a pretty woman, and was never at a loss for a compliment."

Everybody has heard of the marvellous effect produced on Berlioz's ardent imagination by the *Juliet* of Miss Smithson. He relates in his memoirs that an English critic said that after seeing Miss Smithson in *Juliet* he had cried out, "I will marry that woman, and write my grandest symphony on this play." "I did both things," he adds, "but I never said anything of the sort." It is in "Lelio" that the story of his love is embodied; and other compositions of his might be mentioned which were simply the overflow of his passions.

Poor Schubert, who enjoyed little of the fame and less of the fortune that were due him during his brief life, and who was as unattractive in personal appearance as Haydn and Beethoven, does not seem to have cared as much for women as most other composers. Nevertheless he fell deeply in love with a countess, who, however, was too young to reciprocate his feelings. But one day she asked him why he never dedicated any of his compositions to her, whereupon he replied, "Why should I? Are not

all my compositions dedicated to you?" This was as neat a compliment as Beethoven once made Frau von Arnim—an incident which also gives us a glimpse of his manner of composing. One evening at a party Beethoven repeatedly took his note-book from his pocket and wrote a few lines in it. Subsequently, when he was alone with Frau von Arnim, he looked over what he had written and sang it; whereupon he exclaimed: "There, how does that sound? It is yours if you like it; I made it for you, you inspired me with it; *I saw it written in your eyes.*"

Many similar cases might be cited, showing that although women may have done little for music from a creative point of view, they are indirectly responsible for many of the most inspired products of the great composers. And the moral of the story is that a young musician, as soon as he has secured a good poetic subject for a song or an opera, should hasten to fall in love, in order to tune his heart-strings and devotions to concert pitch. And a patriotic wag might, perhaps, be allowed to maintain that, as America has more pretty girls than any other country in the world, it is easier to fall in love here than elsewhere, and that there is, therefore, no excuse whatever for American composers if they do not soon lead the world in musical inspiration.

Feminine beauty, however, is not the only kind

of beauty that arouses dormant musical ideas and brings them to light. The beauty of nature appeals as strongly to musicians as to poets, and is responsible for many of their inspirations. When Mendelssohn visited Fingal's Cave, he wrote a letter on one of the Hebrides, inclosing twenty bars of music "to show how extraordinarily the place affected me," to use his own words. "These twenty bars," says Sir George Grove, "an actual inspiration, are virtually identical with the opening of the wonderful overture which bears the name of 'Hebrides' or 'Fingal's Cave.'" And an English admirer of Mendelssohn, who had the honor of entertaining him in the country, notes how deeply he entered into the beauty of the hills and the woods. "His way of representing them," he says, "was not with the pencil; but in the evenings his improvised music would show what he had observed or felt in the past day. The piece which he called 'The Rivulet,' which he wrote at that time, for my sister Susan, will show what I mean; it was a recollection of a real, actual rivulet.

"We observed" he continues, "how natural objects seemed to suggest music to him. There was in my sister Honora's garden a pretty creeping plant, new at that time, covered with little trumpet-like flowers. He was struck with it, and played for her the music which (he said) the fairies might play

on those trumpets. When he wrote out the piece he drew a little branch of that flower all up the margin of the paper." In another piece, inspired by the sight of carnations, they found that Mendelssohn intended certain arpeggio passages "as a reminder of the sweet scent of the flower rising up."

Mozart, as many witnesses have testified, was especially attuned to composition by the sight of beautiful scenery. Rochlitz relates that when he travelled with his wife through picturesque regions he gazed attentively and in silence at the surrounding sights; his features, which usually had a reserved and gloomy, rather than a cheerful expression, gradually brightened, and then he began to sing, or rather to hum, till suddenly he exclaimed: "If I only had that theme on paper." He always preferred to live in the country, and wrote the greater part of his two best operas, "Don Juan," and "The Magic Flute," in one of those picturesque little garden houses which are so often seen in Austria and Germany. In one of these airy structures, he confessed, he could write more in ten days than he could in his apartments in two months.

Berlioz relates somewhere that the musical ideas for his "Faust" came to him unbidden during his rambles among Italian hills. Weber's melodies are so much like fragrant forest flowers that one feels

sure before being told that he came across them in the woods and fields. His famous pupil, Sir Julius Benedict, relates that Weber took as great delight in taking his friends to see his favorite bits of landscape, as he did in composing a fine piece of music; and he adds that "this love of nature, and principally of forest life, may explain his predilection, in the majority of his operas, for hunting choruses and romantic scenery."

Richard Wagner conceived most of his vigorous and eloquent leading melodies during his rambles among the picturesque environs of Bayreuth, or the sublime snowpeaks of Switzerland. How he elaborated them we shall see later on. Of Beethoven's devotion to nature many curious anecdotes are told by his contemporaries, A harp manufacturer named Stumpff met him in 1823 and wrote an account of his visit in "The Harmonicon," a London journal, in which occurs this passage: "Beethoven is a capital walker and delights in rambling for hours through wild, romantic scenery. I am told, indeed, that he has sometimes been out whole nights on such excursions, and is often absent from home for several days. On the way to the valley [the Hellenenthal, near the Austrian Baden] he often stopped to point out the prettiest views, or to remark on the defects of the new buildings. Then he would go back again to his own thoughts and

hum to himself in an incomprehensible fashion; which, I heard, was his fashion of composing."

Professor Klöber, a well-known artist of that period, who painted Beethoven's portrait, relates that he often met Beethoven during his walks near Vienna. "It was most interesting to watch him," he writes; "how he would stand still as if listening, with a piece of music paper in his hands, look up and down and then write something. Dont had told me when I met him thus not to speak or take any notice, as he would be very much embarrassed or very disagreeable. I saw him once, when I was taking a party to the woods, clambering up to an opposite height from the ravine which separated us, with his broad-brimmed felt hat tucked under his arm; arrived at the top, he threw himself down full length and gazed long into the sky."

Another contemporary of Beethoven, G. F. Treitschke, gives us an interesting glimpse of Beethoven's manner of creating and improvising. Treitschke had been asked to write the text for a new aria that was to be introduced in "Fidelio" when that opera was revived at Vienna in 1814. Beethoven called at seven o'clock in the evening and asked how the text of the aria was getting on. Treitschke had just finished it, and handed it to him. Beethoven read it over, he continues, "walked up and down the room, humming as usual, instead of sing-

ing—and opened the piano. My wife had often asked him in vain to play; but now, putting the text before him, he began a wonderful improvisation, which, unfortunately, there were no magic means of recording. From this fantasy he seemed to conjure the theme of the aria. Hours passed but Beethoven continued to improvise. Supper, which he intended to share with us, was served, but he would not be disturbed. Late in the evening he embraced me and, without having eaten anything, hurried home. The following day the piece was ready in all its beauty."

This anecdote appears to indicate that Beethoven sometimes composed at the piano. Meyerbeer, it is said, always composed at his instrument, and there is a story that he used to jot down the ideas of other composers at the opera and concerts, and, by thinking and playing these over, gradually evolve his own themes. It is rather more surprising to hear, from Herr Pohl, that Haydn sketched all his compositions at the piano. The condition of the instrument, he adds, had its effect upon him, beauty of tone being favorable to inspiration. Thus he wrote to Artaria in 1788: "I was obliged to buy a new forte-piano, that I might compose your clavier sonatas particularly well." "When an idea struck him he sketched it out in a few notes and figures; this would be his morning's work; in the after-

noon he would enlarge this sketch, elaborating it according to rule, but taking pains to preserve the unity of the idea."

Weber's son relates that it was his father's habit to sit at the window on summer evenings and jot down the ideas that had come to him, during his solitary walks, on small pieces of music paper, of which a large number were usually lying on his table. "No piano," he adds, "was touched on these occasions, for his ears spontaneously heard a full orchestra, played by good spirits, while he wrote down his neat little notes." And Weber himself remarks in one of his essays that, "the tone poet who gets his ideas at the piano is almost always born poor, or in a fair way of delivering his faculties into the hands of the common and commonplace. For these very hands, which, thanks to constant practice and training, finally acquire a sort of independence and will of their own, are unconscious tyrants and masters over the creative power. How very differently does *he* create whose *inner* ear is judge of the ideas which he simultaneously conceives and criticises. This mental ear grasps and holds fast the musical visions, and is a divine secret belonging to music alone, incomprehensible to the layman."

Mozart had already learned to compose without a piano when he was only six years old ; and, as Mr.

E. Holmes remarks, "having commenced composition without recourse to the clavier, his powers in mental music constantly increased, and he soon imagined effects of which the original types existed only in his brain."

Schumann wrote to a young musician in 1848: "Above all things, persist in composing mentally, without the aid of the instrument. Turn over your melodic idea in your head until you can say to yourself: 'It is well done.'" Elsewhere he says: "If you can pick out little melodies at the piano, you will be pleased; but if they come to you spontaneously, away from the piano, you will have more reason to be delighted, for then the inner tone-sense is aroused to activity. The fingers must do what the head wishes, and not *vice versa*." And again he says: "If you set out to compose, invent everything in your head. If the music has emanated from your soul, if you have felt it, others will feel it too."

Schumann had discovered the superiority of the mental method of composing from experience. In a letter dated 1838 he writes concerning his "Davidstänze:" "If I ever was happy at the piano it was when I composed these pieces;" and it was well known that up to 1839 "he used to compose sitting at the instrument." We have also just seen how Beethoven practically composed one of his "Fidelio" arias at the piano. Nor was this by any

means an isolated instance. To cite only one more case: Ries relates that one afternoon he took a walk with Beethoven, returning at eight o'clock. "While we were walking," he continues, "Beethoven had constantly hummed, or almost howled, up and down the scale, without singing definite notes. When I asked him what it was, he replied that a theme for the last allegro of the sonata had come into his head. As soon as we entered the room, he ran to the piano, without taking off his hat. I sat down in a corner, and he had soon forgotten me. For at least an hour he now improvised impetuously on the new and beautiful finale of the sonata [opus 57]." Another of Beethoven's contemporaries, J. Russell, has left us a vivid description of Beethoven when thus composing at the piano, or improvising: "At first he only struck a few short detached chords, as if he were afraid of being caught doing something foolish; but he soon forgot his surroundings, and for about half an hour lost himself in an improvisation, the style of which was exceedingly varied, and especially distinguished by sudden transitions. The amateurs were transported, and to the uninitiated it was interesting to observe how his inspirations were reflected in his countenance. He revelled rather in bold, stormy moods than in soft and gentle ones. The muscles of his face swelled, his veins were distended, his eyes rolled

wildly, his mouth trembled convulsively, and he had the appearance of an enchanter mastered by the spirit he had himself conjured."

Russell was probably one of the witnesses of whom Richard Wagner remarked, in his essay on Beethoven, that they have testified to the incomparable impression which Beethoven made by his improvisations at the piano. And Wagner adds the following suggestive words: "The regrets that there was no way of writing down and preserving these instantaneous creations cannot be regarded as unreasonable, even in comparing these improvisations with the master's greatest works, if we bear in mind the fact, taught by experience, that even *less* gifted musicians, whose written compositions are not free from stiffness and inelegance, sometimes positively amaze us by the quite unexpected and fertile inventiveness which they display while improvising."

A similar remark was made by De Quincey, in pointing out the spontaneous origin of some of his essays: "Performers on the organ," he says, "so far from finding their own *impromptu* displays to fall below the more careful and premeditated efforts, on the contrary have oftentimes deep reason to mourn over the escape of inspirations and ideas born from the momentary fervors of inspiration, but fugitive and irrevocable as the pulses in their own flying fingers."

By way of illustrating this thesis a few more cases may be cited. Mozart used to sit up late at night, improvising for hours at the piano, and, according to one witness, "these were the true hours of creation of his divine melodies," a statement which, however, we shall presently see reason to modify somewhat. Schubert never improvised in public like Mozart, but only "in the intervals of throwing on his clothes, or at other times when the music within was too strong to be resisted," as Mr. Grove remarks. What an inestimable privilege it must have been to witness the spontaneous overflow of so rich a genius as Schubert! And once more, Max Maria von Weber writes that his father's improvisations on the piano were like delightful dreams. "All who had the good fortune to hear him," he says, "testify that the impression of his playing was like an Elysian frenzy, which elevates a man above his sphere and makes him marvel at the glories of his own soul."

In reading such enthusiastic descriptions—and musical biographies are full of them—we cannot but echo De Quincey and Wagner in regretting that there has been no shorthand method of taking down and preserving these wonderful improvisations of the great masters. Future generations will be more favored, if Mr. Edison's improved phonograph fulfils the promises made of it. For by simply plac-

ing one of these instruments near the piano it will be possible hereafter to preserve every note and every accent and shade of expression, and reproduce it subsequently at will. And not only will momentary inspirations be thus preserved, but musicians will no longer be compelled to do all the manual labor of writing down their compositions, but will be able to follow the example of those German professors, who when they wish to write a book, simply engage a stenographer to take down their lectures, which they then revise and forward to the publisher. True, the orchestration will always have to be done by the master's own hands, but in other respects musicians of the future will be as greatly benefited as men of letters by the new phonograph which, it is predicted, will create as great a revolution in social affairs as the telegraph and railroad did when first introduced.

The charm of improvisation lies, of course, in this, that we hear a composer creating and playing at the same time. This very fact, however, ought to make us cautious not to overestimate the value of such improvisations. For we all know how a great genius can invest even a commonplace idea with charm by his manner of expressing or rendering it. It is probable, therefore, that in most cases these improvisations, if noted down and played by *others*, would not make as deep an impression as the regularly

written compositions of the great masters. It is with music as with literature. Schopenhauer says that there are three classes of writers: The first class, which is very numerous, never think at all, but simply reproduce echoes of what they have read in books. The second class, somewhat less numerous, think only while they are writing. But the third class, which is very small, only write *after* thinking and because their thoughts clamor for utterance.

If we apply this classification to music we see at once that improvising comes under the second head: improvising is thinking or composing while playing. But the greatest musical ideas are those which are conceived entirely in the mind, which needs no pen or piano mechanically to stimulate its creative power. Of this there can be no question, whatever. With an almost absolute unanimity we find that the greatest composers conceived their immortal ideas in the open air, where there was no possibility of coaxing them out of an instrument. And not only is the bare outline thus composed mentally, but the whole composition with all its involved harmonies and varied orchestral colors is present in the composer's mind before he puts it down on paper. The composition of "Der Freischütz" affords a remarkable confirmation of this statement. Weber began to compose this opera mentally on February 23, but did not write down a

single note before the second of July. That is, he kept the full score of this wonderful work in his brain for more than four months, and, as his son remarks, "there is not a number in it which he did not work over ten times in his mind, until it sounded satisfactory and he could say to himself 'That's it,' and then he wrote it down rapidly without hesitation and almost without altering a note."

This power of elaborating a musical score in the mind, and hearing it inwardly, is a gift which unmusical people find it difficult to comprehend, and which even puzzles many musical people. Yet it is a power which all students of music ought to possess; and, like other capacities, it can be easily cultivated and strengthened.

A comparison with two other senses will throw some light on the matter. Most of us can, by thinking fixedly of some appetizing dish, recall its flavor sufficiently to start a nerve current and stimulate the salivary glands. The image of the flavor, so to speak, makes the mouth water. What do we do when we go to a restaurant and look over the bill of fare? We simply, on reading the list, recall a faint gastronomic image, as it were, of each dish, and the one which is most vivid, owing to the peculiar direction of the appetite, decides our choice.

The sense of sight presents many curious analogies. Mr. Galton, in his "Inquiries into Human

Faculty," gives the results of a series of investigations which show that there are great differences among persons of distinction in various kinds of intellectual work in the power of recalling to the mind's eye clear and distinct images of what they have seen. Some, for instance, in thinking of the breakfast table, could see all the objects—knives, plates, dishes, etc., in the mental picture as bright as in the actual scene, and in the appropriate colors; others could recall only very dim or blurred images of the scene, or none at all; and all stages, from the highest to the lowest visualizing power, were represented in the letters he received on the subject.

Sometimes these mental images are as vivid as the actual images, or even more vivid. Everybody has heard the story of Blake, who, when he was painting a portrait, only required one sitting, because subsequently he could see the model as distinctly as if he were actually sitting in the chair. Mrs. Haweis wrote to Mr. Galton that all her life she has had at times a waking vision of "a flight of pink roses floating in a mass from right to left," and that before her ninth year they were so large and brilliant that she often tried to touch them; and their scent, she adds, was overpowering.

Much has been written regarding the remarkable feats of Zuckertort and Blackburn who can play as

many as sixteen to twenty games of chess at once, and blindfolded. Of course the only way they can do this is by having in the mind a clear picture of each chess-board, with all the figures arranged in proper order.

Mr. Galton says he has among his notes "many cases of persons mentally reading off scores when playing the pianoforte, or manuscripts when they are making speeches;" and he knows a lady, the daughter of an eminent musician, who often imagines she hears her father's playing. "The day she told me of it," he says, "the incident had again occurred. She was sitting in her room with her maid, and she asked the maid to open the door that she might hear the music better. The moment the maid got up the music disappeared."

It is obvious that this case, like that of the eminent painter just referred to, borders closely on the hallucinations of the insane, and Blake *did* become insane subsequently. But usually there is nothing abnormal or pathologic in the power of mentally recalling sights or sounds, and it would be well if everybody cultivated this power. Mr. Galton mentions an electrical engineer who was able to recall forms with great precision, but not color. But after some exercise of his color memory he became quite an adept in that, too, and declared that the newly-acquired power was a source of much pleasure to him.

In music most of us have the power of recalling a simple melody; and who has not been tormented at times by an unbidden melody persistently haunting his ears until he was almost ready to commit suicide? But to recall a melody at will *with any particular tone-color, i.e.*, to imagine it as being played by a flute, or a violin, or a horn, is much less easy; and still more difficult is it to hear two or more notes *at once* in the mind, that is to recall harmonies. It is for this reason that people of primitive musical taste care only for operas which are full of "tunes." These they can whistle in the street and be happy, while the harmonies and orchestral colors elude their comprehension and memory. Consequently they call these works "heavy," "scientific," or "intellectual;" whereas if they took pains to educate their musical imaginations, they would soon revel in the magic harmonies of modern operas, with their infinite variety of gorgeous orchestral colors.

Every student of music should carefully heed Schumann's advice. "Exercise your imagination," he says, "so that you may acquire the power of remembering not only the melody of a composition, but also the harmonies which accompany it." And again he says, "You must not rest until you are able to understand music on paper." I remember that, as a small boy, I used to wonder at my father,

who often sat in a corner all the evening looking over the score of an opera or symphony. And I was very much surprised at the time when he informed me that this simple reading of the score gave him almost as vivid a pleasure as if he heard it with full orchestra. This power of hearing music with the eyes, as it were, is common to all thorough musicians, and is, of course, most highly developed in the great composers. Schumann even alludes to the opinion, which some one had expressed, that a thorough musician ought to be able, on listening for the first time to a complicated orchestral piece, to *see* it bodily as a score before his eyes. He adds, however, that this is the greatest feat that could be imagined ; and I, for my part, doubt whether even the marvellously comprehensive mind of a musical genius would be able to accomplish it.

These facts illustrate the manner in which composers, being virtuosi of the musical imagination, are able to elaborate mentally, and keep in the memory, a complete operatic or symphonic score, just as, for example, Alexander Dumas, when he wished to write a new novel, used to hire a yacht and sail on Southern waters for several days, lying on his back—which, by the way, is an excellent method of starting a train of thought—and thus arranging all the details of the plot in his mind.

The exact way in which *original* ideas come into the mind is, of course, a mystery in music as in literature. Every genius passes through a period of apprenticeship, in which he *assimilates* the discoveries of his predecessors, reminiscences of which make up the bulk of his early works. Everybody knows how Mozartish, *e.g.*, Beethoven's first symphony is, and how much in turn Mozart's early works smack of Haydn. Gradually, as courage comes with years, the gifted composer sets out for unexplored forests and mountain ranges, attempting to scale summits which none of his predecessors had trod. I say, as courage comes, for in music, strange to say, it requires much courage to give the world an entirely new thought. An original composer needs not only the courage that is common to all explorers, but he must invariably come back prepared to face the accusation that his new territory is nothing but a howling wilderness of discords. This has been the case quite recently with Wagner, as it was formerly with Schumann, Beethoven, Mozart, the early Italian composers, and many others, including even Rossini, who certainly did not deviate very far from the beaten paths. Seyfried relates that when Beethoven came across articles in which he was criticised for violating established rules of composition, he used to rub his hands gleefully and burst out laughing. "Yes, yes!" he exclaimed, "that

amazes them, and makes them put their heads together, because they have not seen it in any of their text-books."

Fortunately for their own peace of mind, the majority of the minor composers never get beyond a mere rearrangement of remembered melodies and modulations. Their minds are mere galleries of echoes. They write for money or temporary notoriety, and not because their brains teem with ideas that clamor for utterance. The pianist Hummel was one of this class of composers. But whatever his short-comings, he had at least, as Wagner admits, the virtue of frankness. For when he was asked one day what thoughts or images he had in his mind when he composed a certain concerto, he replied that he had been thinking of the eighty ducats which his publisher had promised him!

Yet even the greatest composers cannot always command new thoughts at will, and it is therefore of interest to note what devices some of them resorted to to rouse their dormant faculties. Weber's only pupil, Sir Julius Benedict, relates that Weber spent many mornings in "learning by heart the words of 'Euryanthe,' which he studied until he made them a portion of himself, his own creation, as it were. His genius would sometimes lie dormant during his frequent repetitions of the words,

and then the idea of a whole musical piece would flash upon his mind, like the bursting of light into darkness."

I have already referred to the manner in which Weber, while composing certain parts of the "Freischütz," got his imagination into the proper state of creative frenzy by picturing to himself his bride as if she were singing new arias for him. Now, in one of Wagner's essays there is a curious passage which seems to indicate that Wagner habitually conjured his characters before his mental vision and made them sing to him, as it were, his original melodies. He advises a young composer who wishes to follow his example never to select a dramatic character for whom he does not entertain a warm interest. "He should divest him of all theatrical apparel," he continues, "and then imagine him in a dim light, where he can only see the expression of his eyes. If these speak to him, the figure itself is liable presently to make a movement, which will perhaps alarm him—but to which he must submit; at last the phantom's lips tremble, it opens its mouth, and a supernatural voice tells him something that is entirely real, entirely tangible, but at the same time so extraordinary (similar, for instance, to what the ghostly statue, or the page *Cherubin* told Mozart) that it arouses him from his dream. The vision has disappeared; but his inner ear continues

to hear; an idea has occurred to him, and this idea is a so-called musical *motive*."

As this passage implies, and as he has elsewhere explained at length, Wagner looked on the mental process of composing as something analogous to dreaming—as a sort of clairvoyance, which enables a musician to dive down into the bottomless mysteries of the universe, as it were, thence to bring up his priceless pearls of harmony. According to the Kant-Schopenhauer philosophy, of which Wagner was a disciple, objects or things in themselves do not exist in space and time, which are mere forms under which the human mind beholds them. We cannot conceive anything except as existing either in space or in time. But there is one exception, according to Wagner, and that is harmony. Harmony exists not in time, for the time-element in music is melody; nor does it exist in space, for the simultaneousness of tones is not one of extension or space. Hence our harmonic sense is not hampered by the forms of the mind, but gives us a glimpse of things as they are in themselves—a glimpse of the world as a superior spirit would behold it. And hence the mysterious superterrestrial character of such new harmonies as we find in the works of Wagner and Chopin—which are unintelligible to ordinary mortals, while to the initiated they come as revelations of a new world.

Without feeling the necessity of accepting all the consequences of Wagner's mystical doctrine, which I have thus freely paraphrased, no one can deny that the attitude of a composer in the moment of inspiration is closely analogous to that known as clairvoyance. The celebrated vocalist, Vogel, tells an anecdote of Schubert which shows strikingly how completely this composer used to be transported to another world, and become oblivious of self, when creating. On one occasion Vogel received from Schubert some new songs, but being otherwise occupied could not try them over at the moment. When he was able to do so, he was particularly pleased with one of them, but as it was too high for his voice, he had it copied in a lower key. About a fortnight afterwards they were again making music together, and Vogel placed the transposed song before Schubert on the desk of the piano. Schubert tried it through, liked it, and said, in his Vienna dialect, "I say, the song's not so bad; *whose is it?*" so completely, in a fortnight, had it vanished from his mind. Grove recalls the fact that Sir Walter Scott once similarly attributed a song of his own to Byron; "but this was in 1828, after his mind had begun to fail."

There is no reason for doubting Vogel's story when we bear in mind the enormous fertility of Schubert. He was unquestionably the most spon-

taneous musical genius that ever lived. Vogel, who knew him intimately, used the very word *clairvoyance* in referring to his divine inspirations, and Sir George Grove justly remarks that, "In hearing Schubert's compositions, it is often as if one were brought more immediately and closely into contact with music itself, than is the case in the works of others; as if in his pieces the stream from the great heavenly reservoir were dashing over us, or flowing through us, more directly, with less admixture of any medium or channel, than it does in those of any other writer—even of Beethoven himself. And this immediate communication with the origin of music really seems to have happened to him. No sketches, no delay, no anxious period of preparation, no revision appear to have been necessary. He had but to read the poem, to surrender himself to the torrent, and to put down what was given him to say, as it rushed through his mind."

Schubert was the most omnivorous song composer that ever lived. He could hardly see a poem—good, bad, or indifferent, without being at once seized by a passionate desire to set it to music. He sometimes wrote half a dozen or more songs in one day, and some of them originated under the most peculiar circumstances. The serenade, "Hark, hark, the lark," for instance, was written in a beer garden. Schubert had picked up a volume of Shakespeare ac-

cidentally lying on the table. Presently he exclaimed, "Such a lovely melody has come into my head, if I only had some paper." One of his friends drew a few staves on the back of a bill of fare, and on this Schubert wrote his entrancing song. "The Wanderer," so full of original details, was written in one evening, and when he composed his "Rastlose Liebe," "the paroxysm of inspiration," as Grove remarks, "was so fierce that Schubert never forgot it, but, reticent as he often was, talked of it years afterward."

These stories remind one of an incident related by Goethe, who one day suddenly found a poem spontaneously evolved in his mind, and so complete that he ran to the desk and wrote it diagonally on a piece of paper, fearing it might escape him if he took time to arrange the paper."

In a word, Schubert *improvised with the pen*, and he seems to have been an exception to Schopenhauer's rule, that the greatest writers are those whose thoughts come to them before writing, and not while writing. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that much of the music which Schubert composed in this rapid manner is poor stuff; and although his short songs are generally perfect in their way, his longer compositions would have gained very much had he taken the trouble to think them out beforehand, or to revise and

condense them afterward, which he very rarely did.

With a strange perversity and persistency, musical students and the public have been led to believe that the surest sign of supreme musical inspiration is the power to dash off melodies as fast as the pen can travel. Weber relates in his autobiographic sketch that he wrote the second act of one of his early operas in ten days, and adds, significantly, that this was "one of the many unfortunate results of the wonderful anecdotes about great masters, which make a deep impression on youthful minds, and incite them to imitation."

Mozart has always been pointed to by preference to show how a really great master shakes his melodies from his sleeves, as it were. Yet, on reading Jahn's elaborate account of Mozart's life and works, nothing strikes one more than the emphasis he places on the amount of preliminary labor which Mozart expended on his compositions, before he wrote them down. It appears to be a well-authenticated fact that Mozart postponed writing the overture to "Don Giovanni," until the midnight preceding the evening when the opera was to be performed in public; and that at seven o'clock in the morning, the score was ready for the copyist, although he had been drinking punch and was so sleepy that his wife had to allow him to doze for two hours, and kept him awake the

rest of the time by telling him funny stories. But this incident loses much of its marvellous character, when we bear in mind that Mozart, according to his usual custom, must have had every bar of the overture worked out in his head, before he sat down to commit it to paper. This last labor was almost purely mechanical, and for this reason, whenever he was engaged in writing down his scores, he not only worked with amazing rapidity, but did not object to conversation, and even seemed to like it; and on one occasion when at work on an opera, he wrote as fast as his hands could travel, although in one adjoining room there was a singing teacher, in another a violinist, and opposite an oboeist, all in full blast!

Mozart himself tried to correct the notion, prevalent even in his day, that he composed without effort—that melodies flowed from his mind as water from a fountain. During one of the rehearsals of "Don Giovanni," at Prague, he remarked to the leader of the orchestra: "I have spared neither pains nor labor in order to produce something excellent for Prague. People are indeed mistaken in imagining that art has been an easy matter to me. I assure you, my dear friend, no one has expended so much labor on the study of composition as I have. There is hardly a famous master whose works I have not studied thoroughly and repeatedly."

Jahn surmises, doubtless correctly, that the rea-

son why Mozart habitually delayed putting down his pieces on paper, was because this process, being a mere matter of copying, did not interest him so much as the composing and creating, which were all done before he took up the pen. "You know," he writes to his father, "that I am immersed in music, as it were, that I am occupied with it all day long, that I like to study, speculate, reflect." He was often absent-minded and even followed his thoughts while playing billiards or nine pins, or riding. Like Beethoven, he walked up and down the room, absorbed in thought, even while washing his hands; and his hair-dresser used to complain that Mozart would never sit still, but would jump up every now and then and walk across the room to jot down something, or touch the piano, while *he* had to run after him holding on to his pigtail.

Allusion has been made to the fact that it was almost always in the open air that new ideas sprouted in Mozart's mind, especially when he was travelling. Whenever a new theme occurred to him he would jot it down on a slip of paper, and he always had a special leather bag for preserving these sketches, which he carefully guarded. These sketches differ somewhat in appearance, but generally they contained the melody or vocal part, together with the bass, and brief indications of the middle parts, and here and there mention of a special instrument.

This was sufficient subsequently to recall the whole composition to his memory. In elaborating his scores he hardly ever made any deviations from the original conception, not even in the instrumentation ; which seems the more remarkable when we reflect that he was the originator of many new orchestral combinations, the beauty of which presented itself to his imagination before his ears had ever heard them in actuality. These new tone-colors, as Jahn remarks, existed intrinsically in the orchestra as a statue does in the marble ; but it remained for the artist to bring them out ; and that Mozart was bound to have them is shown by the anecdote of a musician who complained to him of the difficulty of a certain passage, and begged him to alter it. "Is it possible to play those tones on your instrument?" Mozart asked ; and when he was told it was, he replied, "Then it is your affair to bring them out."

Beethoven's way of mental composing appears at first sight to differ widely from Mozart's. But if we had as many specimens of Mozart's preliminary sketches as we have of Beethoven's, the difference would perhaps appear less pronounced, and would to a large extent resolve itself into the fact that Beethoven did not trust his memory so much as Mozart did, and therefore put more of his *tentative*, or rough sketches, on paper. He always carried in his pockets a few loose sheets of music paper, or a

number of sheets bound together in a note-book. If his supply gave out accidentally, he would seize upon any loose sheet of paper, or even a bill of fare, to note down his thoughts. In a corner of his room lay a large pile of note-books, into which he had copied in ink his first rough pencil-sketches. Many of these sketch-books have been fortunately preserved, and they are among the most remarkable relics we have of any man of genius. They prove above all things that rapidity of work is not a test of musical inspiration, and that Carlyle was not entirely wrong when he defined genius as "an immense capacity for taking trouble." In the "Fidelio" sketch-book, for example, sixteen pages are almost entirely filled with sketches for a scene which takes up less than three pages of the vocal score. Of the aria, "O Hoffnung," there are as many as eighteen different versions, and of the final chorus, ten; and these are not exceptional cases by any means. As Thayer remarks: "To follow a recitative or aria through all its guises is an extremely fatiguing task, and the almost countless studies for a duet or terzet are enough to make one frantic." Thayer quotes Jahn's testimony that these afterthoughts are invariably superior to the first conception, and adds that "some of his first ideas for pieces which are now among the jewels of the opera are so extremely trivial and commonplace, that one would hardly

dare to attribute them to Beethoven, were they not in his own handwriting."

On the other hand these sketch-books bear witness to the extreme fertility of Beethoven's genius. Thayer estimates that the number of distinct ideas noted in them, which remained unused, is as large as the number which he used; and he refers to this as a commentary on the remark which Beethoven made toward the close of his life: "It seems to me as if I were only just beginning to compose." And Nottebohm, who has studied these sketch-books more thoroughly than any one else, thinks that if Beethoven had elaborated all the symphonies which he began in these books we should have at least fifty instead of nine.

The sketch-books show that Beethoven was in the habit of working at several compositions at the same time; and the ideas for these are so jumbled up in his books that he himself apparently needed a guide to find them. At least, when ideas belonging together are widely separated he used to connect them by writing the letters VI over the first passage and DE over the second. He also used to write the word "better" in French on some pages, or else the figures 100, 500, 1,000, etc., probably, as Schindler thinks, to indicate the relative value of certain ideas.

When his mind was in a creative mood, Beethoven was as completely absorbed (or "absent-minded," as

we generally say) as Mozart. This is illustrated by an amusing trait described by his biographers. "Beethoven was extremely fond of washing. He would pour water backwards and forwards over his hands for a long time together, and if at such times a musical thought struck him and he became absorbed, he would go on until the whole floor was swimming, and the water had found its way through the ceiling into the room beneath" (Grove). Consequently, as may be imagined, he not infrequently had trouble with his landlord. He was constantly changing his lodgings, and always spent the summer in the country, where he did his best work. "In the winter," he once remarked to Rellstab, "I do but little; I only write out and score what I have composed in the summer. But that takes a long time. When I get into the country I am fit for anything."

On account of his deafness, Beethoven affords a striking instance of the power musicians have of imagining novel sound effects which they never could have heard with their ears. In literature we blame a writer who, as the expression goes, "evolves his facts from his inner consciousness;" but in music this proceeding is evidence of the highest genius, because music has only a few elementary "facts" or prototypes, in nature. Beethoven was deaf at thirty-two. He never heard his "Fidelio," and for twenty-five years he could hear music only with the inner ear.

But musicians are in one respect more fortunate than painters. If Titian had lost his eyesight, he could never have painted another picture; whereas Beethoven after losing his principal sense still continued to compose, better than ever. Mr. Thayer even thinks that from a purely artistic point of view Beethoven's deafness may have been an advantage to him; for it compelled him to concentrate all his thoughts on the symphonies in his head, undisturbed by the harsh noises of the external world. And that he did not forego the *delights* of music is obvious from the fact that the pleasure of creating is more intense than the pleasure of hearing; and is, moreover illustrated by the great delight he felt in his later years when he read the compositions of Schubert (for he could not hear them) and found in them the evidence of genius, which he did not hesitate to proclaim.

In considering Beethoven's deafness, it is well to bear in mind the words of Schopenhauer: "Genius is its own reward," he says. "If we look up to a great man of the past we do not think, How fortunate he is to be still admired by all of us; but, How happy he must have been in the immediate enjoyment of a mind the traces of which refresh generations of men." Schumann, Weber, and others, repeatedly testify in their letters to the great delight they felt in creating; and at the time when he was arranging his "Freischütz" for the piano, Weber

wrote, more forcibly than elegantly, that he was enjoying himself like the devil.

I have already stated that Weber, like Beethoven, generally got his new ideas during his walks in the country; and riding in an open carriage seems to have especially stimulated his brain, as it did Mozart's. The weird and original music to the dismal Wolf's-Glen scene in the "Freischütz" was conceived one morning when he was on his way to Pillnitz, and the wagon was occasionally shrouded in dense clouds.

A curious story is told by a member of Weber's orchestra, showing how a musical theme may be sometimes suggested by incongruous and grotesque objects. He was one day taking a walk with Weber in the suburbs of Dresden. It began to rain and they entered a beer garden which had just been deserted by the guests in consequence of the rain. The waiters had piled the chairs on the tables, pell mell. At sight of these confused groups of chairs and tables Weber suddenly exclaimed, "Look here, Roth, doesn't that look like a great triumphal march? Thunder! hear those trumpet blasts! I can use that—I can use that!" In the evening he wrote down what his imagination had heard, and it subsequently became the great march in "Oberon."

Some psychological interest also attaches to the remark with which Weber's son prefaces this story

—namely that Weber was constantly transmuting forms and colors into sounds; and that lines and forms seemed to stimulate his melodic inventiveness pre-eminently, whereas sounds affected his harmonic sense.

My subject is by no means exhausted, but for fear of fatiguing the reader with an excess of details I will close with a few facts regarding Richard Wagner's method of composing. I am indebted for these facts to the kindness of Herr Seidl, of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, who was Wagner's secretary for several years, and helped him prepare "Götterdämmerung" and "Parsifal" for the press.

Like his famous predecessors, Wagner always carried some sheets of music paper in his pocket, on which he jotted down with a pencil such ideas as came to him on solitary walks, or at other times. These he gave to his wife, who inked them over and arranged them in piles. In these sketches the vocal part was always written out in full, while the orchestral part was roughly indicated in two or more additional staves. Frau Cosima has preserved most of these sketches, and they will doubtless some day be reproduced in fac-simile, like some of Beethoven's.

Whenever Wagner was in the mood for composing he would say to Herr Seidl, "Bring me my

sketches." Then he would retire to his composing room, to which no one was ever admitted, not even his wife and children. At lunch-time, the servant would bring something to the ante-room, without being allowed to see the master in his sanctum. How Wagner conducted himself there is not known, except that strange vocal sounds, and a few passionate chords on the piano would occasionally reach the ears of neighbors. Wagner appears to have used his piano just as Beethoven did his, even after he had become deaf:—as a sort of lightning-rod for his fervent emotions.

Much nonsense has been written concerning the fact that Wagner used to wear gaudy costumes of silk and satin while he was composing, and that he had colored glass in his windows, which gave every object a mysterious aspect. He was called an imitator of the eccentric King of Bavaria, and some went so far as to declare him insane. But in truth, Wagner was simply endeavoring to put himself into an atmosphere most favorable for dramatic creation. We all know how much clothes help to make a man, in more than one sense; and any one who has ever taken part in private theatricals will remember how much the costume helped him to get into the proper frame of mind for interpreting his rôle. This was all that Wagner aimed at in wearing his mediæval costumes; and the wonderful realism and viv-

idness of his dramatic conceptions certainly more than justify the unusual methods he pursued to attain them.

After elaborating the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic details of his scores, Wagner considered his main task done, and the orchestration was completed down-stairs in his music room. In his earliest operas Wagner did not write his scenes in their regular order, but took those first which specially proffered themselves. Of the "Flying Dutchman," for instance, he wrote the spinning chorus first, and he was delighted to find on this occasion, as he himself says, that he could still compose after a long interruption. He used a piano but rather to stimulate and correct than to invent. In his later works the piano is absolutely out of the question. He wrote the music, scene after scene, following the text; and the conception of the whole score is so absolutely orchestral that the piano cannot even give as faint a notion of it as a photograph can give of the splendors of a Titian. Wagner, as he himself tells us, was unable to play his scores on the piano, but always tried to get Liszt to do that for him.

It is possible that some of my readers have never seen a full orchestral score of "Siegfried" or "Tristan." If so, I advise them to go to a music store and look at one as a matter of curiosity. They will

find a large quarto volume, every page of which represents only one line of music. There are separate staves for the violins, violas, cellos, double basses, flutes, bassoons, clarinets, horns, tubas, trombones, kettle-drums, etc., each family forming a quartette in itself, and each having its own peculiar emotional quality. In conducting an opera the Kapellmeister has to keep his eye and ear at the same time on each of these groups, as well as on the vocal parts and scenic effects. If this requires a talent rarely found among musicians, how very much greater must be the mind which created this complicated operatic score! No one who tries to realize what this implies, and remembers that Wagner wrote several of his best music dramas among the mountains of Switzerland, years before he could dream of ever hearing the countless new harmonies and orchestral tone-colors which he had discovered, can deny, I think, that I was right in maintaining that the composing of an opera is the most wonderful achievement of human genius.

III

SCHUMANN

SCHUMANN

AS MIRRORED IN HIS LETTERS

Clara Schumann, the most gifted woman that has ever chosen music as a profession, and who, at the age of sixty-nine, still continues to be among the most fascinating of pianists, placed the musical world under additional obligations when she issued three years ago the collection of private letters, written by Schumann between the ages of eighteen and thirty (1827–40), partly to her, partly to his mother, and other relatives, friends, and business associates. She was prompted to this act not only by the consciousness that there are many literary gems in the correspondence which should not be lost to the world, but by the thought that more is generally known of Schumann's eccentricities than of his real traits of character. Inasmuch as a wretched script was one of the most conspicuous of these eccentricities, it is fortunate that his wife lived to edit his letters; but even she, though familiar with his handwriting during many years of courtship and marriage, was not infrequently obliged to interpolate a conject-

ural word. Schumann had a genuine vein of humor, which he reveals in his correspondence as in his compositions and criticisms. He was aware that his manuscript was not a model of caligraphy, but, on being remonstrated with, he passionately declared he could not do any better, promising, however, sarcastically that, as a predestined diplomat, he would keep an amanuensis in future. And on page 245 begins a long letter to Clara which presents a curious appearance. Every twentieth word or so is placed between two vertical lines, regarding which the reader is kept in the dark until he comes to this postscript: "In great haste, owing to business affairs, I add a sort of lexicon of indistinctly written words, which I have placed within brackets. This will probably make the letter appear very picturesque and piquant. The idea is not so bad. Adio, clarissima Cara, cara Clarissima." Then follows the "lexicon" of twenty words, including his own signature.

Although, in a semi-humorous vein, Schumann repeatedly alludes in these letters to the "foregone conclusion" that they will some day be printed, there is hardly any indication that such a thought was ever in his mind while writing them. They are, in fact, full of confidences and confessions, some of which he could not have been very ambitious to see in print; such as his frequent appeals for "more

ducats," during his student days, and his sophistically ingenious excuses for needing so much money, placed side by side with his frank admission that he had no talent for economy, and was very fond of cigars, wine, and especially travelling. In one of the most amusing of the letters, he advances twelve reasons why his mother should send him about $200 to enable him to see Switzerland and Italy. As a last, convincing argument, he gently hints that it is very easy for a student in Heidelberg to borrow money at 10 per cent. interest. He got the money and enjoyed his Swiss tour, mostly on foot and alone; but in Italy various misfortunes overtook him—he fell ill, his money ran out, and he was only too glad to return to Heidelberg in the same condition as when he had first arrived there, on which occasion the state of his purse compelled him to make the last part of the journey from Leipsic on foot.

On this trip he enjoyed that unique emotional thrill of the German, the first sight of the Rhine, with which he was so enchanted that he went to the extreme forward end of the deck, smoking a good cigar given him by an Englishman: "Thus I sat alone all the afternoon, revelling in the wild storm which ploughed through my hair, and composing a poem of praise to the Northeast wind"—for Schumann often indulged in poetic efforts, especially when in-

spired to flights of fancy by his favorite author, Jean Paul.

At Heidelberg, which he called "ein ganzes Paradies von Natur," he spent one of the happiest years of his life. Student life at this town he thus compares with Leipsic:

"In and near Heidelberg the student is the most prominent and respected individual, since it is he who supports the town, so that the citizens and Philistines are naturally excessively courteous. I consider it a disadvantage for a young man, especially for a student, to live in a town where the student only and solely rules and flourishes. Repression alone favors the free development of a youth, and the everlasting loafing with students greatly limits many-sidedness of thought, and consequently exerts a bad influence on practical life. This is one great advantage Leipsic has over Heidelberg—which, in fact, a large city always has over a small one. . . . On the other hand, Heidelberg has this advantage, that the grandeur and beauty of the natural scenery prevent the students from spending so much of their time in drinking; for which reason the students here are ten times more sober than in Leipsic."

Schumann himself, as we have said, was fond of a glass of good wine. On his first journey, at Prague, he tells us, the Tokay made him happy. And in

another place he exclaims, "Every day I should like to drink champagne to excite myself." But, though of a solitary disposition, he did not care to drink alone, for "only in the intimate circle of sympathetic hearts does the vine's blood become transfused into our own and warm it to enthusiasm." Schumann's special vice was the constant smoking of very strong cigars; nor does he appear to have devoted to gastronomic matters the attention necessary to nourish such an abnormally active brain as his. At one time he lived on potatoes alone for several weeks; at another he saved on his meals to get money for French lessons; and although he took enough interest in a good *menu* to copy it in a letter, he repeatedly laments the time which is uselessly wasted in eating. Such tenets, combined with his smoking habit, doubtless helped to shatter his powers, leading finally to the lunatic asylum and a comparatively early death.

His frequent fits of melancholy may also perhaps be traced in part to these early habits. Though probably unacquainted with Burton, he held that "there is in melancholy sentiments something extremely attractive and even invigorating to the imagination." Attempts were frequently made by his friends to teach him more sociable habits. Thus, at Leipsic, "Dr. Carus's family are anxious to introduce me to innumerable families—'it would be

good for my prospects,' they think, and so do I, and yet I don't get there, and in fact seldom go out at all. Indeed, I am often very leathery, dry, disagreeable, and laugh much inwardly." That his apparent coldness and indifference to his neighbors and friends were due chiefly to his absorption in his world of ideas, and his consequent want of sympathy with the artificial usages of society, becomes apparent from this confession, written to Clara in 1838 :

"I should like to confide to you many other things regarding my character—how people often wonder that I meet the warmest expressions of love with coldness and reserve, and often offend and humiliate precisely those who are most sincerely devoted to me. Often have I queried and reproached myself for this, for inwardly I acknowledge even the most trifling favor, understand every wink, every subtle trait in the heart of another, and yet I so often blunder in what I say and do."

In these melancholy moods nature was his refuge and consolation. He objected to Leipsic because there were no delights of nature—"everything artificially transformed ; no valley, no mountain, where I might revel in my thoughts ; no place where I can be alone, except in the bolted room, with the eternal noise and turmoil below." Although he

had but a few intimate friends, he was liked by all the students, and even enjoyed the name of "a favorite of the Heidelberg public." One of his intimate friends was Flechsig, but even of him he paradoxically complains that he is too sympathetic: "He never cheers me up; if I am occasionally in a melancholy mood, he ought not to be the same, and he ought to have sufficient humanity to stir me up. That I often need cheering up, I know very well." Yet he was as often in a state of extreme happiness and enjoyment of life and his talents. He even, on occasion, indulged in students' pranks. On his journey to Heidelberg he induced the postilion to let him take the reins: "Thunder! how the horses ran, and how extravagantly happy I was, and how we stopped at every tavern to get fodder, and how I entertained the whole company, and how sorry they all were when I parted from them at Wiesbaden!!" At Frankfort, one morning, he writes: "I felt an extraordinary longing to play on a piano. So I calmly went to the nearest dealer, told him I was the tutor of a young English lord who wished to buy a grand piano, and then I played, to the wonder and delight of the bystanders, for three hours. I promised to return in two days and inform them if the lord wanted the instrument; but on that date I was at Rüdesheim, drinking Rüdesheimer." In another place he gives an account of "a scene

worthy of Van Dyck, and a most genial evening" he spent with some students at a tavern filled with peasants. They had some grog, and at the request of the peasants one of the students declaimed, and Schumann played. Then a dance was arranged. "The peasants beat time with their feet. We were in high spirits, and danced dizzily among the peasant feet, and finally took a touching farewell of the company by giving all the peasant girls, Minchen, etc., smacking kisses on the lips."

Were women, like men, afflicted with retrospective jealousy, Schumann's widow, in editing these letters, would have received a pang from many other passages revealing Schumann's fondness for the fair sex. He allowed no good-looking woman to pass him on the street without taking the opportunity to cultivate his sense of beauty. After his engagement to Clara he gives her fair warning that he has the "very mischievous habit" of being a great admirer of beautiful women and girls. "They make me positively smirk, and I swim in panegyrics on your sex. Consequently, if at some future time we walk along the streets of Vienna and meet a beauty, and I exclaim, 'Oh, Clara! see this heavenly vision,' or something of the sort, you must not be alarmed nor scold me." He had a number of transient passions before he discovered that Clara was his only true love. There was Nanni, his

"guardian angel," who saved him from the perils of the world and hovered before his vision like a saint. "I feel like kneeling before her and adoring her like a Madonna." But Nanni had a dangerous rival in Liddy. Not long, however, for he found Liddy silly, cold as marble, and—fatal defect—she could not sympathize with him regarding Jean Paul. "The exalted image of my ideal disappears when I think of the remarks she made about Jean Paul. Let the dead rest in peace."

Several of his flames are not alluded to in this correspondence. On his travels he appears to have had the habit of noting down in his diary the prevalence and peculiarities of feminine beauty. He complains that from Mainz to Heidelberg he "did not see a single pretty face." Yet, as a whole, the Rhine maidens seem to have won his admiration:

"What characteristic faces among the lowest classes! On the west shore of the Rhine the girls have very delicate features, indicating amiability rather than intelligence; the noses are mostly Greek, the face very oval and artistically symmetrical, the hair brown; I did not see a single blonde. The complexion is soft, delicate, with more white than red; melancholy rather than sanguine. The Frankfort girls, on the other hand, have in common a sisterly trait—the character of German, manly, sad earnestness which we often find in our quondam

free cities, and which toward the east gradually merges into a gentle softness. Characteristic are the faces of all the Frankfort girls: intellectual or beautiful few of them; the noses mostly Greek, often snub-noses; the dialect I did not like."

The English type of beauty appears to have especially won his approval. "When she spoke it sounded like the whispering of angels," he says of an Englishwoman, "as pretty as a picture," whom he met. Elsewhere he says, laconically: "On the 24th I arrived at Mainz with the steamer, in company with twenty to thirty English men and women. Next day the number of English increased to fifty. If I ever marry, it must be an English woman." Some years later, however, with the fickleness of genius, he writes about Ernestine, the daughter of a rich Bohemian Baron, "a delightfully innocent, childish soul, tender and pensive, attached to me and to everything artistic by the most sincere love, extremely musical—in short, just the kind of a girl I could wish to marry." He did become engaged to her, but the following year the engagement was dissolved; and soon after this he discovered that his artistic admiration for Clara Wieck had assumed the form of love. Although her father opposed their union several years, on account of Schumann's poverty, the young couple often met, and not only in the music-room. In 1833 he writes to his mother

regarding Clara: "The other day, when we went to Connewitz (we take a two or three hours' walk almost daily), I heard her say to herself, 'How happy I am! how happy!' Who would not like to hear that! On this road there are a number of very useless stones in the midst of the footpath. Now, as it happens in conversation that I more frequently look up than down, she always walks behind me and gently pulls my coat at every stone, lest I may fall."

It was most fortunate for Schumann that his bride and wife was one of the greatest living pianists. For, owing to the accident to his hand, though he could still improvise, he could not appear in public to interpret his own compositions, which depended so much for their success on a sympathetic performance, since they differed so greatly from the prevalent style of Hummel and the classical masters, that even so gifted a musician as Mendelssohn failed to understand them. But Clara made it the task of her life to secure him recognition, and this was an additional bond that united their souls. "When you are mine," he writes, "you will occasionally hear something new from me; I believe you will often inspire me, and the mere fact that I shall then frequently hear my own compositions will cheer me up;" and: "Your Romance showed me once more that we must become man and wife. Every one of your thoughts comes from my soul, even

as I owe all my music to you." To Dorn he writes that many of his compositions, including the Noveletten, the Kreisleriana, and the Kinderscenen, were inspired by Clara; and it is well known that his love became the incentive to the composition, in one year, of over a hundred wonderful songs—his previous compositions, up to 1840, having all been for the piano alone. In the last letter of this collection he says: "Sometimes it appears to me as if I were treading entirely new paths in music;" and there are many other passages showing that he realized well that the very things which his contemporaries criticised and decried as eccentric and obscure (Hummel, *e.g.*, objects to his frequent changes of harmony and his originality!), were really his most inspired efforts. Though he never allowed the desire for popularity to influence his work, yet he occasionally craves appreciation. "I am willing to confess that I should be greatly pleased if I could succeed in composing something which would impel the public, after hearing you play it, to run against the walls in their delight; for vain we composers are, even though we have no reason to be so." It must have given him a strange shock when an amateur asked him, at one of his wife's concerts in Vienna, if he also was musical!

In her efforts to win appreciation for her husband, Clara was nobly assisted by Liszt. Just like Wag-

ner, Schumann was not at first very favorably impressed with Liszt, owing to the sensational flavor of his early performances. But he soon changed his mind, especially when Liszt played some of his (Schumann's) compositions. "Many things were different from my conception of them, but always '*genial*,' and marked by a tenderness and boldness of expression which even he presumably has not at his command every day. Becker was the only other person present, and he had tears in his eyes." And two days later: "But I must tell you that Liszt appears to me grander every day. This morning he again played at Raimund Härtel's, in a way to make us all tremble and rejoice, some études of Chopin, a number of the Rossini soirées, and other things." Of other contemporary pianists Hummel, "ten years behind the time," and Thalberg, whom he liked better as pianist than as composer, are alluded to. Yet he writes in 1830 that he intends going to Weimar, "for the sly reason of being able to *call myself* a pupil of Hummel." Wieck, his father-in-law, he esteemed greatly as teacher and adviser, but it offended him deeply that Wieck should have followed the common error of estimating genius with a yard-stick, and asked where were his "Don Juan" and his "Freischütz?" His enthusiasm for Schubert, Chopin, and especially for Bach, finds frequent expression. Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavichord" he declares is his "grammar, and

the best of all grammars. The fugues I have analyzed successively to the minutest details ; the advantage resulting from this is great, and has a morally bracing effect on the whole system, for Bach was a man through and through ; in him there is nothing done by halves, nothing morbid, but all is written for time eternal." Six years later : " Bach is my daily bread ; from him I derive gratification and get new ideas—' compared with him we are all children,' Beethoven has said, I believe." One day a caller remarked that Bach was old and wrote in old-fashioned manner: " But I told him he was neither old nor new, but much more than that, namely, eternal. I came near losing my temper." Concerning the unappreciative Mendelssohn, he writes to Clara :

" I am told that he is not well disposed toward me. I should feel sorry if that were true, since I am conscious of having preserved noble sentiments toward him. If you know anything let me hear it on occasion ; that will at least make me cautious, and I do not wish to squander anything where I am ill-spoken of. Concerning my relations toward him as a musician [1838], I am quite aware that I could learn of him for years ; but he, too, some things of me. Brought up under similar circumstances, destined for music from childhood, I would surpass you all—that I feel from the energy of my inventive powers."

Concerning this energy he says, some time after

this, when he had just finished a dozen songs: "Again I have composed so much that I am sometimes visited by a mysterious feeling. Alas! I cannot help it. I could wish to sing myself to death, like a nightingale."

One of the most interesting bits of information contained in this correspondence is that, when quite a young man, Schumann commenced a treatise on musical æsthetics. In view of the many epoch-making thoughts contained in his two volumes of collected criticisms, it is very much to be regretted that this plan was not carried out. On one question of musical psychology light is thrown by several of these letters. Like many other composers, it seems that Schumann often, if not generally, had some pictorial image or event in his mind in composing. "When I composed my first songs," he writes to Clara, "I was entirely within you. Without such a bride one cannot write such music." "I am affected by everything that goes on in the world—politics, literature, mankind. In my own manner I meditate on everything, which then seeks utterance in music. That is why many of my compositions are so difficult to understand, because they relate to remote affairs; and often significant, because all that's remarkable in our time affects me, and I have to give it expression in musical language." One of the letters to Clara begins: "Tell me what the first part of

the Fantasia suggests to you. Does it not bring many pictures before your mind?" Concerning the "Phantasiestücke" he writes: "When they were finished I was delighted to find the story of Hero and Leander in them. . . . Tell me if you, too, find this picture fitting the music." "The Papillons," he says once more, are intended to be a musical translation of the final scene in Jean Paul's "Flegeljahre."

Believers in telepathy will be interested in the following additional instance of composing with a visual object in mind: "I wrote to you concerning a presentiment; it occurred to me on the days from March 24th to 27th, when I was at work on my new composition. There is a place in it to which I constantly recurred; it is as if some one sighed, 'Ach, Gott!' from the bottom of his heart. While composing, I constantly saw funeral processions, coffins, unhappy people in despair; and when I had finished, and long searched for a title, the word 'corpse-fantasia' continually obtruded itself. Is not that remarkable? During the composition, moreover, I was often so deeply affected that tears came to my eyes, and yet I knew not why and had no reason—till Theresa's letter arrived, which made everything clear." His brother was on his death-bed.

The collection of Schumann's letters so far under consideration met with such a favorable reception

that a second edition was soon called for, and this circumstance no doubt promoted the publication of a second series, extending to 1854, two years before Schumann's sad death in the lunatic asylum near Bonn. This second volume includes a considerable number of business letters to his several publishers. In one of these he confides to Dr. Härtel his plan of collecting and revising his musical criticisms, and publishing them in two volumes. But as this letter was, a few months later, followed by a similar one addressed to the publisher Wigand, who subsequently printed the essays, it is to be inferred that Breitkopf & Härtel, though assured of the future of Schumann's compositions, doubted the financial value of his musical essays—an attitude pardonable at a time when there was still a ludicrous popular prejudice against literary utterances by a musician. In 1883, however, after Wigand had issued a third edition of the "Collected Writings on Music and Musicians" (which have also been translated into English by Mrs. Ritter), Breitkopf & Härtel atoned for their error by purchasing the copyright.

Schumann's letters to his publishers show that he used to suggest his own terms, which were commonly acceded to without protest. For his famous quintet he asked twenty louis d'or, or about $100; for "Paradise and the Peri," $500; the piano concerto, $125; Liederalbum, op. 79, $200; "Manfred,"

$250. He frequently emphasizes his desire to have his compositions printed in an attractive style, and in 1839 writes to Härtel that he cannot describe his pleasure on receiving the "Scenes of Childhood." "It is the most charming specimen of musical typography I have ever seen." The few misprints he discovers in it he frankly attributes to his MS. In a letter to his friend Rosen he writes that "it must be a deucedly comic pleasure to read my Sanskrit." But his musical handwriting appears to have been nearer to Sanskrit than his epistolary, if we may judge by the specimen fac-similes printed in Naumann's "History of Music."

The promptness with which all the leading music publishers of Germany issued complete editions of Schumann's vocal and pianoforte compositions, as soon as the copyright had expired, shows how profitable they must be. But during his lifetime it was quite otherwise, and in a letter to Kossmaly he adduces the following four reasons for this state of affairs: "(1) inherent difficulties of form and contents; (2) because, not being a virtuoso, I cannot perform them in public; (3) because I am the editor of my musical paper, in which I could not allude to them; (4) because Fink is editor of the other paper, and would not allude to them." Elsewhere he remarks, concerning this rival editor: "It is really most contemptible on Fink's part not to have

mentioned a single one of my pianoforte compositions in nine [seven] years, although they are always of such a character that it is impossible to overlook them. It is not for my name's sake that I am annoyed, but because I know what the future course of music is to be." It was in behalf of this tendency that he toiled on his paper, which at first barely paid its expenses, having only 500 subscribers several years after its foundation. And he not only avoided puffing his own compositions, but even inserted a contribution by his friend Kossmaly in which he was placed in the second rank of vocal composers ! Yet, though he printed the article, he complains about it in a private letter : " In your article on the Lied, I was a little grieved that you placed me in the *second* class. I do not lay claim to the first, but I think I have a claim to a place of *my own*, and least of all do I wish to see myself associated with Reissiger, Curschmann, etc. I know that my aims, my resources, are far beyond theirs, and I hope you will concede this and not accuse me of vanity, which is far from me."

Many of the letters in the present collection are concerned with the affairs of Schumann's paper, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, detailing his plans for removing it to a larger city than Leipsic, and the atrocious red-tape difficulties and delays he was subjected to when he finally did transfer it to Vienna.

Although the paper was exclusively devoted to music, the *Censur* apparently took three or four months to make up its mind whether the state was in danger or not from the immigration of a new musical periodical. The editor confesses that he did not find as much sympathy as he had expected in Vienna ; yet the city—as he writes some years later at Düsseldorf—" continues to attract one, as if the spirits of the departed great masters were still visible, and as if it were the real musical home of Germany." " Eating and drinking here are incomparable. You would be delighted with the Opera. Such singers and such an *ensemble* we do not have." " The admirable Opera is a great treat for me, especially the chorus and orchestra. Of such things we have *no conception* in Leipsic. The ballet would also amuse you." " A more encouraging public it would be difficult to find anywhere ; it is really too encouraging —in the theatre one hears more applause than music. It is very merry, but it annoys me occasionally." " But I assure you confidentially that long and alone I should not care to live here ; serious men and affairs are here in little demand and little appreciated. A compensation for this is found in the beautiful surroundings. Yesterday I was in the cemetery where Beethoven and Schubert are buried. Just think what I found on Beethoven's grave : *a pen*, and, what is more, a steel pen. It was a happy omen

for me and I shall preserve it religiously." On Schubert's grave he found nothing, but in the city he found Schubert's brother, a poor man with eight children and no possessions but a number of his brother's manuscripts, including "a few operas, four great masses, four or five symphonies, and many other things." He immediately wrote to Breitkopf & Härtel to make arrangements for their publication.

It is anything but complimentary to the discernment of Viennese publishers and musicians of that period that, eleven years after Schubert's death, another composer had to come from Leipsic and give to the world the works of a colleague who not only had genius of the purest water, but the gift of giving utterance to his musical ideas in a clear style, intelligible to the public. Schubert died in 1828, and in 1842 Schumann could still write to one of his contributors: "It is time, it seems to me, that some one should write something weighty in behalf of Schubert; doesn't this tempt you? True, his larger works are not yet in print. But his vocal and pianoforte compositions suffice for an approximate portrait. Consider the matter. Do you know his symphony in C? A delightful composition, somewhat long, but extraordinarily animated, in character entirely new." To a Belgian friend who intended to write an article on the new tendencies in pianoforte

music, he wrote: "Of older composers who have influenced modern music I must name above all Franz Schubert. . . . Schubert's songs are well known, but his pianoforte compositions (especially those for four hands) I rate at least equally high."

Of the numerous criticisms of well-known composers contained in this correspondence, a few more may be cited. They are mostly favorable in tone, but concerning the "Prophète" he writes: "The music appears to me very poor; I cannot find words to express my aversion to it." "Lortzing's operas meet with success—to me almost incomprehensible." To Carl Reinecke he writes that he is "no friend of song-transcriptions (for piano), and of Liszt's some are a real abomination to me." He commends Reinecke's efforts in this direction because they are free from pepper and sauce *à la* Liszt. Nevertheless, those of Liszt's song-transcriptions in which he did not indulge in too much bravura ornamentation are models of musical translation, and the collection of forty-two songs published by Breitkopf & Härtel should be in every pianist's library. "Of Chopin," he writes in 1836, "I have a new ballad [G minor]. It seems to me to be his most enchanting (though not most *genial*) work; I told him, too, that I liked it best of all his compositions. After a long pause and reflection he said: 'I am glad you think so, it is also my favorite.' He also played for me a number of new

études, nocturnes, mazurkas—everything in an incomparable style. It is touching to see him at the piano. You would be very fond of him. Yet Clara is more of a *virtuoso*, and gives almost more significance to his compositions than he does himself."

Brendel having sent him some of Palestrina's music, he writes that "it really sounds sometimes like music of the spheres—and what art at the same time! I am convinced he is the greatest musical genius Italy has produced." Nineteen years previous to this he had written from Brescia: "Were not the Italian language itself a kind of eternal music (the Count aptly called it a long-drawn-out A-minor chord), I should not hear anything rational. Of the ardor with which they play, you can form no more conception than of their slovenliness and lack of elegance and precision." Handel appears to be mentioned only once in all of Schumann's correspondence ("I consider 'Israel in Egypt' the ideal of a choral work"), but Bach is always on his tongue. The following is one of the profoundest criticisms ever written: "Mozart and Haydn knew of Bach only a few pages and passages, and the effect which Bach, if they had known him in all his greatness, would have had on them, is incalculable. The harmonic depth, the poetic and humorous qualities of modern music have their source chiefly in Bach: Mendelssohn, Bennett, Chopin, Hiller, all the so-called Ro-

manticists (I mean those of the German school) *approximate in their music much closer to Bach than to Mozart.*"

To Wagner there are several references, betraying a most remarkable struggle between critical honesty and professional jealousy. Thus, in 1845, Schumann writes to Mendelssohn of "Tannhäuser:"

"Wagner has just finished a new opera—no doubt a clever fellow, full of eccentric notions, and bold beyond measure. The aristocracy is still in raptures over him on account of his 'Rienzi,' but in reality he cannot conceive or write four consecutive bars of good or even correct music. What all these composers lack is the art of writing pure harmonies and four-part choruses. The music is not a straw better than that of 'Rienzi,' rather weaker, more artificial! But if I should write this I should be accused of envy, hence I say it only to you, as I am aware that you have known all this a long time."

But in another letter to Mendelssohn, written three weeks later, he recants: "I must take back much of what I wrote regarding 'Tannhäuser,' after reading the score; on the stage the effect is quite different. I was deeply moved by many parts." And to Heinrich Dorn he writes, a few weeks after this: "I wish you could see Wagner's 'Tannhäuser.' It contains profound and original ideas, and is a hundred times better than his previous operas, though

some of the music is trivial. In a word, he may become of great importance to the stage, and, so far as I know him, he has the requisite courage. The technical part, the instrumentation, I find excellent, incomparably more masterly than formerly."

Nevertheless, seven years later still, he once more returns to the attack, and declares that Wagner's music, "apart from the performance, is simply amateurish, void of contents, and disagreeable; and it is a sad proof of corrupt taste that, in the face of the many dramatic master-works which Germany has produced, some persons have the presumption to belittle these in favor of Wagner's. Yet enough of this. The future will pronounce judgment in this matter, too." Poor Schumann! His own opera, "Genoveva," was a failure, while "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin" were everywhere received with enthusiasm. This was a quarter of a century ago; and the future *has* judged, "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin" being now the most popular of all works in the operatic repertory.

What caused the failure of Schumann's only opera was not a lack of dramatic genius, but of theatrical instinct. He believed that in "Genoveva" "every bar is thoroughly dramatic;" and so it is, as might have been expected of the composer of such an intensely emotional and passionate song as "Ich grolle nicht" and many others. But Schubert, too, could

write such thrilling five-minute dramas as the "Erlking" and the "Doppelgänger," without being able to compose a successful opera. Like Schumann, he could not paint *al fresco*, could not command that bolder and broader sweep which is required of an operatic composer. It is characteristic of Schumann that he did not write an opera till late in life, whereas born operatic composers have commonly begun their career with their specialty. Indeed, it was only ten years before he composed his opera that Schumann wrote to a friend: "You ought to write more for the voice. Or are you, perhaps, like myself, who have all my life placed vocal music below instrumental, and never considered it a great art? But don't speak to anyone about this." Oddly enough, less than a year after this he writes to another friend: "At present I write only vocal pieces. . . . I can hardly tell you what a delight it is to write for the voice as compared with instruments, and how it throbs and rages within me when I am at work. Entirely new things have been revealed to me, and I am thinking of writing an opera, which, however, will not be possible until I have entirely freed myself from editorial work."

Like other vocal composers, Schumann suffered much from the lack of suitable texts. In one letter he suggests that Lenau might perhaps be induced to write a few poems for composers, to be printed

in "The Zeitschrift:" "the composers are thirsting for texts." In several other letters we become familiar with some of his plans which were never executed, owing, apparently, to the shortcomings of the librettists. One of these was R. Pohl, who in all earnestness sent Schumann a serious text in which the moon was introduced as one of the vocalists! Schumann mildly remonstrated that "to conceive of the moon as a person, especially as singing, would be too risky." So the project of "Ritter Mond" was abandoned, and it is to be regretted that Schumann did not reject his "Genoveva" libretto, which was largely responsible for the failure of the opera.

One project of Schumann's is mentioned which it is to be very much regretted he never carried out. "I am at present [1840] preparing an essay on Shakspere's relations to music, his utterances and views, the manner in which he introduces music in his dramas, etc., etc.—an exceedingly fertile and attractive theme, the execution of which would, it is true, require some time, as I should have to read the whole of Shakspere's works for this purpose." His object was to send this to Jena as a dissertation for a Doctor's degree, with which he hoped to soften the heart of the obdurate Wieck, who opposed his marriage with Clara, and at the same time to make an impression on the public. Schumann had had painful experience of the fact that for genius itself

there is little recognition in Germany unless it has a handle to its name—a "von" or a "Herr Doctor." Clara, however, loved him for his genius, and for the impassioned pieces and songs he wrote to express his admiration of her and of woman in general; and, like other German men of genius, he had his reward—after death. "No tone poet," says Naumann, "has been more enthusiastic in the praise of woman than Robert Schumann; he was a second Frauenlob. This was acknowledged by the maidens of Bonn, who, at his interment, filled the cemetery, and crowned his tomb with innumerable garlands."

IV

MUSIC AND MORALS

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Although music in the complex harmonic form known to us is only a few centuries old, simple rhythmic melodies were sung, or played on various instruments, by all the ancient civilized nations, and are sung or played to-day by African and Australian savages who have never come into contact with civilization. And what is more, the remarkable influence which music has in arousing human emotions has been appreciated at all times.

Tourists relate that in some of the inland countries of Africa, scarcely any work is done by the natives except to the sound of music; and Cruikshank, speaking of the coast negroes, says it is laughable to observe the effect of their rude music on all classes, old and young, men, women, and children. "However employed, whether passing quietly through the street, carrying water from the pond, or assisting in some grave procession, no sooner do they hear the rapid beats of a distant drum, than they begin to caper and dance spontaneously. The bricklayer will throw down his trowel for a minute, the carpen-

ter leave his bench, the corn grinder her milling stone, and the porter his load, to keep time to the inspiriting sound."

Dr. Tschudi, in his fascinating work on Peru, describes two of the musical instruments used by the Indians, and their emotional function. One is the Pututo, "a large conch on which they perform mournful music, as the accompaniment of their funeral dances." The other is called Jaina, and is a rude kind of clarionet made from a reed. "Its tone," says Tschudi, "is indescribable in its melancholy, and it produces an extraordinary impression on the natives. If a group of Indians are rioting and drinking, or engaged in furious conflicts with each other, and the sound of the Jaina is suddenly heard, the tumult ceases, as if by a stroke of magic. A dead stillness prevails, and all listen devoutly to the magic tones of the simple reed; tones which frequently draw tears from the eyes of the apathetic Indians."

If the untutored primitive man can be thus overpowered by the charm of such simple music, we can hardly wonder at the extravagant power ascribed to this art by the ancient civilized nations. The fairy tale of Orpheus, who tamed wild animals and moved rocks and trees with his singing and playing, and the story of the dolphin that was attracted by Arion's song and carried him safely across

the sea, are quite as significant as if they were true stories, for they show that the Greeks were so deeply moved by music that they could readily imagine it to have a similar effect on animals, and even on inanimate objects. Almost three thousand years ago, Homer represented Achilles as "comforting his heart with the sound of the lyre," after losing his sweet Briseis; "stimulating his courage and singing the deeds of the heroes." And, as Emil Naumann fancies, there is a moral underlying the myth of the siren; "for, as Homer elsewhere suggests, noble and manly music invigorates the spirit, strengthens wavering man, and incites him to great and worthy deeds, whereas false and sensuous music excites and confuses, robs man of his self-control, till his passions overcome him as the waves overwhelmed the bewitched sailor who listened to the voice of the charmer."

At a later period in Greek history, the philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle, continued to attribute to music power so great, that we can only understand them if we bear in mind that with the Greeks the word music was a comprehensive term for all the arts presided over by the Muses, and that, even when music in our sense is alluded to by them, the reference is at the same time to the poetry which was almost always associated with music, and made its meaning and expression more definite. Thus, we

can realize how Terpander could, by the power of his song, reconcile the political factions in Sparta, and how Plato could write, in the "Republic," that "any musical innovation is full of danger to the state and ought to be prevented." He looked upon music as a tonic which does for the mind what gymnastics do for the body; and taught that only such music ought to be tolerated by the state as had a moral purpose, while enervating forms should be suppressed by the law makers.

Yet, after making due allowance for the fact that the word music was used in this comprehensive sense, enough remains to show that the power of music proper, the power of rhythmic melody, was profoundly appreciated by the Greeks. If they had not felt how greatly music intensifies and quickens the emotions, they would not have wedded all their poetry to it, nor have resorted to it on all solemn and festive occasions; nor would the Pythagoreans have found anyone willing to believe in their doctrine that music has power to control the passions. "They firmly believed," says Naumann, "that sweet harmony and flowing melody alone were capable of restoring the even balance of the disturbed mind, and of renewing its harmonious relations with the world. Playing on the lyre, therefore, formed part of the daily exercises of the disciples of the renowned philosopher, and none dared seek his nightly couch

without having first refreshed his soul at the fount of music, nor return to the duties of the day without having braced his energies with jubilant strains. Pythagoras is said to have recommended the use of special melodies as antidotal to special passions, and indeed, it is related of him that on a certain occasion he, by a solemn air, brought back to reason a youth who, maddened by love and jealousy, was about setting fire to the house of his mistress."

Similar marvellous powers were ascribed to music by the other nations. The Chinese have an old saying that "Music has the power to make Heaven descend upon earth." This art was constantly kept under rigid supervision by the government, and 354 years before Christ, one of the Emperors issued a special edict against weak, effeminate music; to which, therefore, a demoralizing influence was obviously attributed. The Japanese, we read, likewise "revere music and connect it with their idol worship," and in olden times it seems to have had even a political function, for it is said that "formerly an ambassador, in addressing a foreign court to which he was accredited, did not speak, but sang his mission." The Hindoos, again, attributed supernatural power to music. Some melodies had the power, as they believed, to bring down rain, others to move men and animals, as well as lifeless objects. The fact that they traced the origin of music to the gods

shows in what esteem they held it; and their quaint story of the 16,000 nymphs and shepherdesses, each of whom invented a new key and melody in her emulous eagerness to move the heart and win the love of the handsome young god Krishna, shows that the amorous power of music was already understood in those days.

Once more, the exalted notions which the ancient Hebrews had of the dignity and importance of music, is indicated by the fact that, according to Josephus, the treasures of Solomon's Temple (which was also a great school of music) included 40,000 harps and psalteries of pure copper, and 200,000 silver trumpets. In the schools of the prophets, musical practice was an essential item. During the period of captivity the Israelites at first gave way to despondency, exclaiming, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" "But by and by they would take down their harps again from the willow bows and seek solace for the sorrows of the long exile in recalling the loved melody of their native land, and the sacred psalmody of their desolated temple" (McClintock and Strong). There was hardly an occasion arising above the commonplace events of everyday life, when the ancient Hebrews did not resort to music. Trumpets were used at the royal proclamations and at the dedication of the Temple. There were doleful chants for funeral processions; joyous

melodies for bridal processions and banquets ; stirring martial strains to incite courage in battle and to celebrate victories, religious songs, and domestic music for private recreation and pleasure ; and even "the grape gatherers sang as they gathered in the vintage, and the wine-presses were trodden with the shout of a song ; the women sang as they toiled at the mill, and on every occasion the land of the Hebrews, during their national prosperity, was a land of music and melody." And finally, the therapeutic value of music and its power to stimulate the creative faculties were recognized. The prophets composed their songs and uttered their prophecies to the sound of musical instruments, and David drove out the evil spirit from Saul, as we read in the Bible : "And it came to pass when the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp and played with his hands. So Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

The preceding facts sufficiently illustrate the effects of music on the emotions and morals of ancient and primitive nations. Now, within the Christian era music has made enormous strides in its evolution as an art, and it seems therefore reasonable to infer that its emotional and moral power has also increased. Yet, strange to say, a tendency has manifested itself of late, in many quarters, to flatly deny the emotional and moral potency of music.

The late Richard Grant White, for instance, in a series of articles on the Influence of Music, in "The Atlantic Monthly," comes to the conclusion that "a fine appreciation of even the noblest music is not an indication of mental elevation, or of moral purity, or of delicacy of feeling, or even (except in music) of refinement of taste." "The greatest, keenest pleasure of my life," he adds, "is one that may be shared equally with me by a dunce, a vulgarian, or a villain;" and he ends by asserting, dogmatically, that a taste for music has no more to do with our minds or morals than with our complexions or stature. Dr. Hanslick, the eminent critic and professor of musical history in the University of Vienna, goes even farther. "There can be no doubt," he says, "that music had a much more direct effect on the ancient nations than it has on us." To-day, "the feelings of the layman are affected most, those of an educated artist least, by music." "The moral influence of tones increases in proportion as the culture of mind and character decreases. The smaller the resistance offered by culture, the more does this power strike home. It is well known that *it is on savages that music exerts its greatest influence.*"

Let us briefly test these sceptical paradoxes in the light of mediæval history and modern biography. Is it only among the ancient and primitive people, and among the musically uneducated, that the divine art

exerts an emotional influence? St. Jerome evidently did not think so. He believed, at any rate, that music can exert a *demoralizing* influence, and he taught that Christian maidens should know nothing of the lyre and the flute. The eminent divine was guided in this matter by the same process of illogical reasoning of which, later, the Puritans were guilty when they banished music from the churches. In view of the fact that music was used to heighten the charms of wanton Roman festivities or Pagan rites, St. Jerome condemned the art itself, ignorant of the fact that music can never be immoral in itself, but only through evil associations. St. Augustine took a different view of music from St. Jerome. When he first heard the Christian chant at Milan he exclaimed: "Oh, my God! When the sweet voice of the congregation broke upon mine ear, how I wept over Thy hymns of praise. The sound poured into mine ears and Thy truth entered my heart. Then glowed within me the spirit of devotion; tears poured forth, and I rejoiced." Here we have an illustration of how music intensifies and exalts the emotions of educated men. St. Augustine's devotion "glowed within him" when he heard the music. It is for this power that the church has always employed music as a hand-maid; and those ecclesiastics who would to-day banish it arbitrarily from the church, know not what a valuable ally they are blindly re-

pulsing in these days of religious scepticism. As Mr. Gladstone very recently remarked: "Ever since the time of St. Augustine, I might perhaps say of St. Paul, the power of music in assisting Christian devotion has been upon record, and great schools of Christian musicians have attested and confirmed the union of the art with worship."

But the greatest musical enthusiast in the ranks of mediæval churchmen was Martin Luther. To judge by the extraordinary influence which music had on him, Luther must doubtless be classed among the lowest of savages, if Dr. Hanslick is right in saying that it is on savages that music exerts its greatest influence. He wrote a special treatise on music, in which he placed it next to theology. "Besides theology," he wrote in a letter to the musician Senfel, "music is the only art capable of affording peace and joy of the heart like that induced by the study of the science of divinity. The proof of this is that the devil, the originator of sorrowful anxieties and restless troubles, flees before the sound of music almost as much as he does before the Word of God. This is why the prophets preferred music before all the other arts. . . . proclaiming the Word in psalms and hymns. . . . My heart, which is full to overflowing, has often been solaced and refreshed by music when sick and weary."

Luther had a good voice and a knowledge of musical composition. He played the flute and the lute, and in church he introduced congregational singing, in which the people took an active part in worship by means of the chorales. It is related that, as a child, he used to sing with other boys in the street in winter, for his daily bread, and that on one occasion, Frau Cotta frantically rushed from her house on hearing his pleading tones, took him in, and gave him a warm meal. Later in life, when he was an Augustine monk, he often chased away his melancholy and temptations by playing on his lute, and the story goes that "one day, after a self-inflicted chastisement, he was found in a fainting condition in his cell, and that his cloistered brethren recalled him to consciousness by soft music, well knowing that music was the balsam for all wounds of the troubled mind of their 'dear Martinus.'"

Coming to more recent times, we find that some of the greatest composers and other men of genius were "savages," judged by Dr. Hanslick's standard.

When Congreve wrote that "music hath charms to soothe the savage breast," did he not mean to imply that educated people are not affected by it? Take the case, for instance, of that old barbarian, Joseph Haydn, and note how he was affected by the "Creation" when he heard it sung. "One moment," he said to Griesinger, "I was as cold as ice, and the

next I seemed on fire, and more than once I feared I should have a stroke." Another "savage," Cherubini, when he heard a Haydn symphony for the first time, was so greatly excited by it that it forcibly moved him from his seat. "He trembled all over, his eyes grew dim, and this condition continued long after the symphony was ended. Then came the reaction. His eyes filled with tears, and from that instant the direction of his work was decided." (Nohl.)

Similar incidents might be quoted from the biographies of almost all the great composers. Berlioz, in his essay on Music, after referring to the story of Alexander the Great, who fell into a delirium at the accents of Timotheus, and the story of the Danish King Eric, "whom certain songs made so furious that he killed some of his best servants," dwells on the inconsistency of Rousseau, who, while ridiculing the accounts of the wonders worked by ancient music, nevertheless, "seems in other places to give them enough credence to place that ancient art, which we hardly know at all, and which he himself knew no better than the rest of us, far above the art of our own day." For himself, Berlioz believed that the power of modern music is of at least equal value with the doubtful anecdotes of ancient historians. "How often," he says, "have we not seen hearers agitated by terrible spasms, weep and

laugh at once, and manifest all the symptoms of delirium and fever, while listening to the masterpieces of our great masters." He relates the case of a young Provençal musician, who blew out his brains at the door of the Opéra after a second hearing of Spontini's "Vestale," having previously explained in a letter, that after this ecstatic enjoyment, he did not care to remain in this prosaic world; and the case of the famous singer Malibran, who, on hearing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony for the first time, at the Conservatoire, "was seized with such convulsions that she had to be carried out of the hall." "We have in such cases," Berlioz continues, "seen time and again, serious men obliged to leave the room to hide the violence of their emotions from the public gaze." As for those feelings which Berlioz owed personally to music, he affirms that nothing in the world can give an exact idea of them to those who have not experienced them. Not to mention the moral affections that the art developed in him, and only to cite the impressions received at the moment of the performance of works he admired, this is what he says he can affirm in all truthfulness: "While hearing certain pieces of music, my vital forces seem at first to be doubled; I feel a delicious pleasure, in which reason has no part; the habit of analysis itself then gives rise to admiration; the emotion, growing in the direct

ratio of the energy and grandeur of the composer's ideas, soon produces a strange agitation in the circulation of the blood; my arteries pulsate violently; tears, which usually announce the end of the paroxysm, often indicate only a progressive stage which is to become much more intense. In this case there follow spasmodic contractions of the muscles, trembling in all the limbs, a total numbness in the feet and hands, partial paralysis of the optic and auditory nerves. I can no longer see, I can hardly hear: vertigo . . . almost swooning . . . "
Such was the effect of music on Berlioz.

As in a matter of this sort personal testimony is of more value than anything else, I may perhaps be permitted to refer to some of my own experiences. I have often been in the state of mind and body so vividly described by Berlioz, except as regards the numbness of the extremities and the partial paralysis of the sensory nerves. Hundreds of times I have enjoyed that harmless æsthetic intoxication which I believe to be more delicious to the initiated than the sweet delights of an opium eater—a musical intoxication which does not only fill the brain with floods of voluptuous delight, but sends thrills down the spinal column and to the very finger-tips, like so many electric shocks. As a boy, every experience of this sort fired my imagination with ambition, and led to all sorts of noble resolutions, some

of which, at any rate, were carried into execution. The deepest impression ever made on me by any work of art was at Munich, ten years ago, when I heard for the first time Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde," which I was already familiar with through the pianoforte score. The performance began at six o'clock, and I had had nothing to eat since noon. It lasted till eleven o'clock, and one might imagine that, after all this emotional excitement, I must have been ravenously hungry. So I was; but without the slightest affectation, I was horrified at the mere thought of indulging in such a coarse act as eating after enjoying such ravishing music. So I hurried back to the hotel, eager to get into my room and indulge in a long fit of weeping; and not a wink did I sleep that night, the most passionate scenes from the opera haunting me persistently, and almost as vividly as if I had been back in the theatre.

Indeed, it was the irresistible power of Wagner's music that first made me go to Europe, and that changed the whole current of my life. After graduating from Harvard I had only a few dollars in my pocket; but instead of trying to find employment and earn my daily bread, I recklessly borrowed $500 of a good-natured uncle and went to Europe, for the sole purpose of attending the first Bayreuth Festival. I had about four hundred dollars when I arrived in Bayreuth, and of these I spent two hundred and

twenty-five dollars for tickets for the three series of Nibelung performances, not knowing what would become of me after the remaining one hundred and seventy-five dollars was spent. It was several weeks before the performances, and Wagner had given strict orders that no one, without exception, should be admitted to the rehearsals. But I was not to be so easily baffled, and one afternoon I sneaked into the lobby and succeeded in catching some wonderful orchestral strains by applying my ear to a keyhole. But my pleasure was short-lived. An attendant espied me and summarily ordered me off the premises, despite my humble entreaties and attempts at bribery. I now resolved to make a personal appeal to Wagner; so, a few days later, as he was entering the theatre, arm in arm with Wilhelmj, I boldly walked up to him and told him I had bought tickets to all the performances, but was very anxious to attend the rehearsals, adding that I represented a New York and a Boston journal. At the mention of the word newspaper, a frown passed over his face, and he said, rather abruptly, "I don't care much about newspapers. I can get along without them." But, in a second, a smile drove away the frown and he added: "I have given orders that no one shall be admitted. However, you have come a long way—and as I have found it necessary to make some exceptions, I will admit you too." He then asked for

my card and told me I would be admitted by mentioning my name to the doorkeeper. That he did not bear any deep resentment against me for unfortunately being a newspaper man, he showed the next day, by walking up to me and asking me if I had succeeded in getting in.

I mention these incidents because I think they help to disprove the notion that modern music has less power over the actions and feelings of men than primitive and ancient music. It was the wild enthusiasm inspired in me by Wagner's earlier operas that led me irresistibly to Bayreuth, and I really would have been willing to toil as a slave for years rather than miss this festival. And my experience was that of hundreds who had saved up their pennies for this occasion, or had formed pools and drawn lots if the sum was too small. I met three men in Bayreuth who had scraped together enough money for a third-class trip from Berlin, but not enough to pay for a complete Nibelung ticket for each. So they took turns and each heard his share of the Trilogy. The artists, moreover, the greatest in Germany, were prompted by their enthusiasm to give their services at this festival without any pecuniary compensation. Such actions are more eloquent of deep feeling than any words could be. How trivial are those ancient *myths* about Arion and Orpheus compared with this modern *fact*—the building of the Bayreuth Theatre

with the million marks contributed by Wagner's admirers in all parts of the world!

It is easy to see how Prof. Hanslick fell into the error of imagining that music exerts its greatest influence on savages. He probably inferred this from the fact that savages are more obviously excited by it, and gesticulate more wildly, than we do. But this does not prove his point. Savages are more *demonstrative* in their expression of *all* their emotions than we are; but this does not indicate that their emotions are *deeper*. On the contrary, as the poet has told us, it is the shallow brooks and the shallow passions that murmur; "the deep are dumb." It is a rule of etiquette in civilized society to repress any extravagant demonstration of feeling by gestures; and this is the reason why we are apparently less affected by music than savages. Yet, how difficult it is even to-day to repress the muscular impulses imparted by gay music, is seen in the irresistible desire to dance which seizes us when we hear a Strauss waltz played with the true Viennese swing; and in the provoking habit which some people have of beating time with their feet. Would anyone assert that a man who thus loudly beats time with his boots is more deeply affected by the music than you or I who keep quiet? Fiddlesticks! He shows just the contrary. If he had as delicate and intense an appreciation of the music as you have, he would know

that the noise made by his boots utterly mars the purity of the musical sound, and jars on refined ears like the filing of a saw. If demonstrativeness is to be taken as a test of feeling, then the ignorant audiences who stamp and roar over the vulgar horse-play in a variety show have deeper feelings than the educated reader who, in his room, enjoys the exquisite works of humor of the great writers without any other expression than a smile.

Granted, then, that music has as much power to move our feelings as ever, if not more, and bearing in mind that feeling is the chief spring of action, does it not follow that music affects our *moral* conduct, making us more refined and considerate in our dealings with other people? Not necessarily and obviously, it seems, for there are authorities who, while conceding the emotional sway of music, deny that it has any positive moral value. The eminent critic, Prof. Ehrlich, takes this sceptical attitude, in his "History of Musical Æsthetics." If music, and art in general, has power to soften the hearts of men, how is it, he asks, that the citizens of Leipsic did not come to the rescue of the last daughter of the great Bach, but allowed her to live in abject poverty? And how is that, in Florence and Rome, some of the greatest patrons of art were princes who were extremely unscrupulous in their manner of getting rid of their enemies? Other instances might be added to

those given by Prof. Erlich. African tourists say that the Dahomans, although passionately fond of singing and of instrumental music, are probably the most cruel of all negroes. Nero, the cruelest of emperors, is said to have regaled his ears with music after setting fire to Rome ; and you have all heard the story of the two famous prima donnas whose vicious temper and jealousy drove them to a tooth and nail contest on the stage, right before the public. Everybody knows, furthermore, what a lot of scamps and vagabonds are included in the number of so-called music teachers, and what irregular lives some composers have led.

At first sight, these facts look formidable and discouraging ; but they are nothing of the sort. If anyone asserted that music is *a moral panacea,* an infallible cure for all vices, these facts would, of course, be fatal to his argument ; but no one would be so foolish as to make such an extravagant claim in behalf of music. Music may be, and doubtless is, a moral force, but it is not strong enough to overcome all the various demoralizing forces that counteract it ; hence, it must often fail to show triumphant results. If we take the cases just cited, and examine them separately, we see that they are delusive. Is it not asking a good deal of the Leipsic citizens to support the poor relatives and descendants of all the great men that city has produced? If Bach himself had

lived to claim their charity, I am convinced he would have been cared for, notwithstanding the fact that probably most of those who love his music are poor themselves, while the public at large does not even understand it, and cannot, therefore, be morally affected by it. Similarly, the reason why the Viennese allowed Schubert to starve was not because his music failed to make them generous, but because he died before they had learned even to understand it. To-day they worship his very bones, and build Schubert museums and monuments.

Again, if savages and emperors can be musical and cruel at the same time, this only proves, as I have just said, that music is not strong enough to overcome *all* the vicious inherited and cultivated habits of civilized and uncivilized barbarians. As for the fighting prima donnas, it is obvious that a singer whose success is constantly dependent upon the whims of a fickle public, is more subject than almost any other mortal to constant attacks of envy and jealousy, so that it is unfair not to make some allowance for temper in her case. Allowances must also be made for music teachers, who, from the very nature of their profession, rarely hear music as it ought to be, and therefore naturally become impatient and irritable. They illustrate, not the normal, but the abnormal effects of music. Moreover, owing to the lamentable ignorance of so many parents and pupils,

the profession of music teachers is invaded with impunity by hundreds of tramps who know so little of music that, if they tried to become cobblers or tailors with a corresponding amount of knowledge, they would be ignominiously kicked out of doors. Surely it is unfair to lay the sins of these vagabonds on the shoulders of music.

Finally, as regards the moral character and temper of composers, it should be remembered that, if some of them occasionally gave way to their angry passion, they were generally provoked to it by the obtuseness and insulting arrogance of their contemporaries. Had these contemporaries honored and commended them for enlarging the boundaries of art and the sphere of human pleasures, instead of tormenting them with cruel and ignorant criticisms, the great composers would, no doubt, have been amiable in their public relations, as they appear to have been almost invariably toward their friends. Wagner's pugnacity and frequent ill-temper, for instance, arose simply from the fact that, while he was toiling night and day to compose immortal master-works, his contemporaries not only refused to contribute enough for his daily bread, but assailed him on all sides with malicious lying, stupid criticisms, with as much obvious enjoyment of this flaying alive of a genius as if they were a band of Indians torturing a prisoner of war. Among his friends, Wagner was

one of the most gentle, tender, and kind-hearted of men, and it made him frantic to see even a dumb animal suffer. He wrote a violent pamphlet against vivisection, and one day missed an important train because he stopped to scold a peasant woman who was taking to the market a basket of live fish in the agony of suffocation. I hardly know of a great composer who, in his heart of hearts, was not gentle and generous. Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Gluck, Schubert, Beethoven, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Weber, Liszt, and a dozen others who might be named, though not without their faults, were kind and honest men, living arguments for the ennobling effects of music.

In no other profession can men and women be found so ready to aid a colleague in distress. Take the case of poor Robert Franz, for instance, who lost his hearing through the whistle of a locomotive, and thereby lost his professional income, and was brought to the verge of starvation because his stupid contemporaries (I mean ourselves) refused to buy his divine songs. Hardly had his misfortune become known when Liszt, Joachim, and Frau Magnus arranged a concert tour for his benefit which netted $23,000, and insured him comfort for the rest of his life.

And in general, let me ask, why is it that, whenever a charitable project is organized, musicians are

invariably called upon first to give their services? Does not this amount to an eloquent and universal presumption that musical people are generous and kind-hearted?

Nor is this the only kind of presumption indicating that music commonly goes hand in hand with kindness. The English in the days of Elizabeth, as Chappell tells us, "had music at dinner, music at supper, music at weddings, music at funerals, music at night, music at dawn, music at work, music at play. He who felt not, in some degree, its soothing influence, was viewed as a morose unmusical being, whose converse ought to be shunned, and regarded with suspicion and distrust." That this was the general sentiment in England is also proved by the oft-quoted passage in "The Merchant of Venice," where Shakspere notes the magic effect of music on men and animals, and concludes with the verses—

> "The man that hath no music in himself
> Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;
> The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
> And his affections dark as Erebus;
> Let no such man be trusted."

This, of course, is a poetic exaggeration, for we know that there are other sources of refinement besides music, and that some of the noblest men and women can hardly tell two tunes from one another. Never-

theless, the general presumption remains that music and jolly good-nature go together, and that music is incompatible with crime. An experience I once had in Switzerland brought home this fact to my mind in a forcible manner. I was taking a fortnight's tramp, all alone, and one day I came near the summit of a mountain pass where, some time previously, a solitary tourist had been robbed and murdered. There was no house within five miles, and I had not met a soul that morning until I approached this place, when I suddenly saw a shabbily dressed man coming down the road. Not having any weapon, I could not but feel nervous, and my heart began to beat almost audibly. Presently the man, who had apparently not yet noticed me, began to sing a Tyrolese melody. With the first notes all my fear instantly vanished, and I breathed freely again ; for an instinctive feeling had told me that a man intent on murder and robbery would not sing.

Such presumptions, however, although they have some weight as arguments, do not amount to full proof. Our feelings may mislead us, and cannot be accepted in lieu of facts. We must therefore confront our problem more directly. In what manner does music affect our moral character? Does it make us less inclined to murder, stealing, lying, lust, avarice, anger, hatred, jealousy, dishonesty, cruelty, and other vices? And if so, by what means?

I find among writers on Music and Morals, a curious tendency to dodge the direct question, and indulge in side issues and digressions. Mr. Haweis, in his book on the subject, talks glibly about the training of the emotions, and has much to tell about the lives of the composers, but very little bearing directly on his subject. Wagner, in one of his essays, asserts that music has as much influence on tastes and morals as the drama itself. A frivolous and effeminate taste, he says, cannot but affect our moral conduct. The Spartans understood this when they forbade certain kinds of music as demoralizing. He believes that men who are inspired by Beethoven's music make more active and energetic citizens than those who are charmed by Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti; and he refers to the fact that in Paris, at a certain period, music became more and more frivolous as the people degenerated morally. At the same time he is obliged to admit that this, perhaps, proves rather the effect of morals on music than of music on morals; and so our problem remains in a vague twilight.

To gain more light on the subject, let us take a few specific cases. Does the influence of music make us less inclined to perpetrate murder, suicide, or cruel practices? Everybody has heard the story of the famous Italian composer and vocalist, Stradella, whose wonderful singing in an oratorio made such a

profound impression on two men who had been hired to murder him, that they not only spared him, but gave him warning that his life was in danger. This story is now regarded as a myth by some of the best authorities; but the fact that it was so long believed universally is not without significance. Take another case, which, though occurring in a ficticious drama, might easily be true. Faust, in Goethe's drama, when on the point of committing suicide, is brought back to his senses on suddenly hearing the Easter hymn. But in this case it might be said it was not the music itself, but the religious and other associations and memories awakened by it, that prevented Faust from carrying out his criminal intention. Such associations must always be taken into account when estimating the moral value of music; and yet they do not explain everything. A residue is left which must be placed to the credit of music.

Perhaps the vice best adapted to illustrate the direct influence of musical culture is cruelty. If you find a boy in the back yard torturing a cat or a dog, or bullying and maltreating his playmates, it will probably do no good to sing or play to him by way of softening his heart. On the contrary, he will probably not appreciate or understand the music at all, and the interruption will only annoy and anger him. But if you take that same boy and put

him in a house where there is an *infectious musical atmosphere*, the chances are that before long his feelings will undergo a change, and he will no longer derive any pleasure from cruelty. This pleasure is one which boys share with savages, and the best way to eradicate it is by cultivating the æsthetic sensibilities. "It cannot be doubted," says Eduard von Hartmann, in his "Philosophie des Schönen," "that æsthetic culture is one of the most important means of softening the moral sentiments and polishing coarse habits;" and Shelley, in his "Defence of Poetry," says, "It will readily be confessed that those among the luxurious citizens of Syracuse and Alexandria who were delighted with the poems of Theocritus were less cold, cruel, and sensual than the remnant of their tribe."

Now, music seems to be better adapted to bring about a regeneration of the heart than even poetry, and for two reasons: In the first place, poetry can, and often does, inculcate immoral sentiments, whereas music, pure and simple, can never be immoral. As Dr. Johnson remarks, "Music is the only sensual pleasure without vice." Secondly, it is in childhood that our moral habits are formed, and it is well known that children are susceptible to the influence of music at least five or ten years before they can really understand poetry. The infant in arms has its impatience and anger subdued count-

less times by the charms of a cradle song ; and in this way music sweetens its temper, turns its frowns into smiles, and prevents it from becoming habitually cross and vicious. True, some young children also like to read and recite poetry, but what delights them in this case is the *musical* jingle of rhyme and rhythm, rather than the specific qualities of the verse.

Later in life, when the children go to school, they are, as expert testimony proves, beneficially affected by singing together, which rests and refreshes the brain, and teaches them the value and beauty of co-operation. While thus singing, each child experiences the same joyous or sad feelings as its classmates, and learns in this way the great moral lesson of *sympathy.* And this brings us back to what was said a moment ago regarding the vice of cruelty. Sympathy is the correlative and antidote of cruelty. If savages were not utterly devoid of sympathy, they would not take such strange delight in witnessing the cruel tortures they inflict upon their prisoners. Indeed, it may be asserted that almost all crimes spring from a lack of sympathy, and modified forms of cruelty. If you reflect a moment, you must admit that a man who is truly sympathetic—that is, who rejoices in his neighbor's happiness and grieves over his misfortunes—can be neither ungenerous, nor deceitful, nor covetous, nor jealous, nor ferocious, nor avaricious, etc. ; and one need not therefore be

a pantheist to agree with Schopenhauer, that Mitleid, or sympathy, is the basis of all virtues. If, therefore, it can be shown that music is a powerful agent in developing this feeling of sympathy, its far-reaching moral value will become apparent. And this can be done easily.

Rousseau named his collection of songs "The Consolations of the Miseries of my Life;" Shakspere called music "The food of love;" and Chopin, in one of his letters to a friend, after referring to his first love affair, adds, "How often I relate to my piano everything I should like to communicate to you." Similar remarks might be quoted by the score from the letters of composers and other great men devoted to music, showing that music is valued like a personal friend who is always ready to sympathize with our joys and sorrows. And when a real music-lover comes across a beautiful new piece, how he bubbles over with enthusiasm to play or sing it to his friends, and let them share the pleasure; his own being doubled thereby! I know of no other art that so vividly arouses this unselfish feeling, this desire for sympathetic communion. Indeed, music is the most unselfish of all the arts. A poem is generally read in solitude, and a picture can be seen by only a few at a time; but a concert or opera may be enjoyed by 5,000 or more at a time—the more the merrier. I have already stated

that in public schools music helps to develop a sympathetic feeling of mutual enjoyment. And why is it that music, ever since the days of the ancient Hebrews and Greeks, has been always provided at political meetings and processions, at picnics, dances, funerals, weddings—in short, at all social and public gatherings? Obviously, because it has the power of uniting the feelings of many into one homogeneous and sympathetic wave of emotion. It has a sort of *compulsive* force which hurries along even those who are sluggish or unwilling. Plato, in his Republic, gives the curious advice that, at meetings of older people wine should be distributed, in order to make them more pliable and receptive to the counsel of sages. Many would object to such a risky policy, which, moreover, can well be dispensed with, since music has quite as much power as wine to arouse a sympathetic and enthusiastic state of mind at a public assembly, and without any danger of disastrous consequences. It is the special function of music to intensify all the emotions with which it is associated. It inflames the courage of an army of soldiers marching on to defend their country, their homes and families. It exalts the religious feelings of church-goers, and makes them more susceptible to the minister's moral counsels. Is it not absurd to say that such an art has no moral value? One of the most eloquent of modern preachers, the

late Henry Ward Beecher, went so far as to admit that "In singing, you come into sympathy with the Truth as you perhaps never do under the preaching of a discourse."

The Rev. Dr. Haweis also bears testimony to the moral value of music, in the following words: "I have known the Oratorio of the Messiah draw the lowest dregs of Whitechapel into a church to hear it, and during the performance sobs have broken forth from the silent and attentive throng. Will anyone say that for these people to have their feelings for once put through such a noble and long-sustained exercise as that, could be otherwise than beneficial? If such performances of both sacred and secular music were more frequent, we should have less drunkenness, less wife-beating, less spending of summer gains, less winter pauperism. People get drunk because they have nothing else to do; they beat their wives because their minds are narrow, their tastes brutal, their emotions, in a word, ill-regulated."

These remarks suggest one of the most important moral functions of music—that of *weaning the people from low and demoralizing pleasures.* In proportion as the masses are educated to an appreciation of the subtle and exquisite pleasures afforded by the fine arts, and especially by music, will they become indifferent to, and abhor, exhibitions which involve cruelty to man and animals, such as dog-fights, box-

ing-matches, dangerous and cruel circus tricks, executions of criminals, etc. The pleasure derived from such brutal exhibitions is the same in kind as that which prompts savages to flay alive their prisoners of war. And the morbid pleasure which so many apparently civilized people take in reading in the newspapers, column after column, about such brutal sports, is the survival of the same unsympathetic feeling. I am convinced that no one who really appreciates the poetic beauty of a Schubert song or a Chopin nocturne can read these columns of our newspapers without feelings of utter disgust. And I am as much convinced as I am of my own existence, that a man who derives more pleasure from good music than from these vulgar columns in the newspapers, is morally more trustworthy than those who gloat over them. Music can impart only good impulses ; whereas, we hear every day of boys and men who, after reading a dime novel or the police column in a newspaper, were prompted to commit the crimes and indulge in the vices they had read about. Hence, if people could be weaned from the vulgar pleasure of reading about crimes and scandals, and taught instead to love innocent music, can any one doubt that they would be morally the better for it ? Just as a tendency to drunkenness can best be combated by creating a taste for harmless light wines and beer in place of coarse whiskey and gin, so a love of

demoralizing and degrading amusements can best be eradicated by educating the poetic and musical sensibilities of the masses. Why are the lower classes in Germany so much less brutal, degraded, and dangerous than the same classes in England? Obviously, because, after their day's labor, they do not drink poisonous liquor in a dirty den of crime, but go to sip a few glasses of harmless beer in a garden while listening to the merry sounds of music.

Men *will* have, and *must* have, their pleasures. Social reformers and temperance agitators could not make a greater mistake than by following the example of the Puritans and tabooing *all* pleasures. They ought to distinguish between those that have a tendency to excess and vice, and those that are harmless and ennobling, encouraging the latter in every possible way. And first among those that should be encouraged is music, because it is always ennobling, and can be enjoyed simultaneously by the greatest number. Its effect is well described in Margaret Fuller's private journal: "I felt raised above all care, all pain, all fear, and every taint of vulgarity was washed out of the world." I think this is an extremely happy expression. Female writers sometimes have a knack of getting at the heart of a problem by instinct, more easily than men with their superior reasoning powers. "Every taint of vulgarity washed out of the world by music." That is pre-

cisely wherein the moral power of music lies; for vulgarity is the twin sister of vice. It is criminal to commit a murder; it is vulgar to gloat over the contagious details of it in books and newspapers. But how rampant vulgarity still is, and how rare æsthetic culture, is shown by the fact that two-thirds of the so-called news in many of our daily papers consist of detailed reports of crimes in all parts of the world, which are eagerly read by hundreds of thousands, while our concert halls have to be filled with dead-heads.

There is one more way in which music affects our moral life, to which I wish to call attention, namely, through its value as a tonic. No operatic manager has ever thought of advertising his performances as a tonic, yet he might do so with more propriety than the patent medicine venders whose grandiloquent advertisements take up so much space in our newspapers. Plato, in the "Laws," says that "The Gods, pitying the toils which our race is born to undergo, have appointed holy festivals in which men rest from their labors." Lucentio, in "The Taming of the Shrew," advances the same opinion in more definite and pungent terms:

> "Preposterous ass! that never read so far
> To know the cause why music was ordain'd!
> Was it not to refresh the mind of man
> After his studies, or his usual pain?"

There can be no doubt whatever that music has the most remarkable effect, not only on our minds, but on our bodies. Physiologists tell us that different kinds of mental activity are carried on in different parts of the brain, and that, in order to recover from fatigue, we need not rest altogether, but merely take up some other kind of work. Hundreds of times I have found that, however much I may be fatigued by a day's brain work, I can play all the evening, or attend a concert or opera, without in the least adding to my fatigue. On the contrary, in most cases it disappears altogether, the music acting on the mind as a surf bath does on the body. Like many others, I have found that the best way to cure a headache is to attend an orchestral concert. It works like a charm. It stirs up the circulation in the brain as a brisk walk does in the body. Even brain disease is eased in this way. The power of music even to cure insanity altogether, was frequently maintained in ancient and mediæval times. This claim is doubtless exaggerated, yet there is more than a grain of truth in it. There can be no doubt that violent maniacs can be calmed, and melancholy ones cheered and soothed, by music. To get an authoritative opinion on this subject, I wrote to Dr. Hammond. He answered: "I know of no cases of insanity that have been cured by music, but I have seen many cases in which music has

quieted insane persons, exerting the same calming influence that it does on most of us when we are irritated by petty annoyances."

"When we are irritated by petty annoyances." It is then that music becomes a medicine and a moral tonic. Writers on ethics have, hitherto, too much overlooked the moral importance of health. Where there is a lack of health, we rarely find any moral sweetness of temper. The vices may be small and peevish, but in their aggregate they are enough to poison the happiness of the household. If a man comes to ruin from drink and the crimes it leads him to commit, we call him immoral. But is he not also immoral if, from excess of work and worry, and wilful neglect of exercise, rest, and recreation, he breaks down and beggars his family, becoming a burden to them instead of a help? I think he is, and that, instead of pitying such a man, we should censure him. Ignorance of the laws of hygiene, physical and mental, is no valid excuse. He can buy a book on the subject for one dollar. But he does not even need to do that. Music, we read in Shakespere, has the power of "killing care and grief of heart," and what he needs, therefore, is to hear some good music every evening, at home or at the opera. This will draw the blood from the overworked part of his brain to another part, and by thus relieving it of the tormenting persistency of worry-

ing thoughts and business cares, enable him to enjoy refreshing, dreamless sleep afterward. In this way music may help to restore his health, cure his dyspepsia, and sweeten his moral temper.

In America, more than anywhere else, is music needed as a tonic, to cure the infectious and ridiculous business fever which is responsible for so many cases of premature collapse. Nowhere else is so much time wasted in making money, which is then spent in a way that contributes to no one's happiness—least of all the owner's. We Americans are in the habit of calling ourselves the most practical nation in the world, but the fact is it would be difficult to find a nation less practical. For, what is the object of life? Is it to toil like a galley slave and never have any amusements? Every nation in Europe, except the English, knows better how to enjoy the pleasures of life than we do. Our so-called "practical" men look upon recreation as something useless, whereas in reality it is the most useful thing in the world. Recreation is re-creation—regaining the energies lost by hard work. Those who properly alternate recreation with work, economize their brain power, and are therefore infinitely more practical than those who scorn or neglect recreation.

The utility and the moral value of refined pleasures is not sufficiently understood. It should be

proclaimed from the housetops every day. Bread and butter to eat, and a bed to sleep in, are not the only useful things in the world, but, in the words of Shelley, "Whatever strengthens and purifies the affections, enlarges the imagination, and adds spirit to sense, is useful." Music is useful because it does this, and it is useful in many other ways. Singing strengthens the lungs, playing the muscles, and both stimulate the mind. Milton, Schiller, George Sand, Alfieri, and other geniuses have testified that music aroused their creative faculties; and in Beaconsfield's "Contarini" occurs this passage: "I have a passion for instrumental music. A grand orchestra fills my mind with ideas. I forget everything in the stream of invention." Furthermore, music is a stepping-stone to social success. A gifted amateur is welcomed at once into circles to which others may vainly seek admission for years; and a young lady with a musical voice has a great advantage in the period of courtship. But most important of all is the moral value of music as an *ennui* killer. *Ennui* leads to more petty crimes than anything else; and a devotee of music need never suffer a moment's *ennui*. There are enough charming songs and pieces to fill up every spare moment in our lives with ecstatic bliss, and to banish all temptation to vice. It is in reference to similar pleasures that Sir John Lubbock, in his essay

on the "Duty of Happiness," exclaims: "It is wonderful, indeed, how much innocent happiness we thoughtlessly throw away." The art of enjoying life is an accomplishment which few have thoroughly mastered.

V

ITALIAN AND GERMAN VOCAL STYLES

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Why is it that most persons are more interested in vocal than in instrumental music? Obviously because, as Richard Wagner remarks, "the human voice is the oldest, the most genuine, and the most beautiful organ of music—the organ to which alone our music owes its existence." And not only is the sound or quality of the human voice more beautiful than that of any artificial instrument, but it is capable of greater variation. Although a good artist can produce various shades of tone on his instrument, yet every instrument has a well-defined characteristic *timbre*, which justifies us in speaking, for instance, of the majestic, solemn trombone, the serene flute, the amorous violoncello, the lugubrious bassoon, and so on. The human voice, on the other hand, is much less limited in its powers of tonal and emotional coloring. It is not dependent for its resonance on a rigid tube, like the flute, or an unchangeable sounding-board, like the violin or the piano, but on the cavity of the mouth, which

can be enlarged and altered at will by the movements of the lower jaw, and the soft parts—the tongue and the glottis. These movements change the overtones, of which the vowels are made up, and hence it is that the human voice is capable of an infinite variety of tone-color, compared with which Wagner admits that even "the most manifold imaginable mixture of orchestral colors must appear insignificant."

Notwithstanding that the superiority of the voice is thus conceded, even by the greatest magician of the orchestra, we daily hear the complaint that the good old times of artistic singing are gone by, and have been superseded by an instrumental era, in which the voice merely plays the part of the second fiddle and is maltreated by composers, who do not understand its real nature. So far is this opinion from the truth that it must be said, contrariwise, that it is only within the last century—I might almost say the last half century—that composers have begun fully to recognize the true function of the human voice and its principal advantage over instruments.

What is this advantage? It is the power of articulating, of uniting poetry with music, *definite words with indefinite tones.* Every instrument, as I have just said, has a characteristic emotional tone-color. But the emotions expressed by them are

vague and indefinite. A piece of instrumental music can express an eager, passionate yearning for something, but it cannot tell what that something is—whether it is the ardent longing of an absent lover, or the heavenward aspiration of a religious enthusiast. The vocalist, on the other hand, can clearly tell us the object of that longing by using definite words. And by thus arousing reminiscences in the hearer's mind, and adding the charm of poetry to that of music, he doubles the power and impressiveness of his art.

Now, a very brief sketch of the history of solo singing will show that this special advantage of the human voice over instruments was, if not entirely overlooked, at least considered of secondary importance in practice, until Gluck and Schubert laid the foundations for a new style, in which the distinctively *vocal* side of singing has gradually become of greater importance than the instrumental side; as we see in the music-dramas of Wagner, and the Lieder, or parlor-songs, of Schumann, Franz, Liszt, and others.

Although *folk-song* appears to be as old as the human race, the history of *artistic* song, or song written by professional composers for the concert hall, can be traced back only about three centuries. Before that time vocal music was generally polyphonic, that is, for several voices; and a contra-

puntal style of music had been introduced into Italy from the Netherlands, which was so complicated and artificial that the poetic text had no chance whatever of asserting its rights and being understood. Now, the modern opera, which was originated about three hundred years ago by a number of Florentine amateurs, although it sprang from a desire to revive the ancient Greek drama, in which music was united with poetry, represents at the same time a reaction against this unintelligible Netherland style. The new opera at first went to the opposite extreme, making the distinct declamation of the text its principal object and neglecting vocal ornamentation, and even melody, on purpose. The famous vocalist and teacher, Caccini, although he taught his pupils how to sing trills and roulades, declared that they were not essential to good singing, but merely a means of tickling the ear, and, therefore, generally to be avoided. He taught the Italian singers how to express the passions, and reproduce the meaning of the words they sang—an art which, according to the Roman, Pietro della Valle, was not previously known to them.

The dry declamation of the first Italian operas, however, was not supported by a sufficiently rich accompaniment to be enjoyable after the first sense of novelty had passed away; and even the gifted Monteverde's ingenious innovations in instrumental

coloring and in the free use of expressive discords, could not ward off a second reaction, in favor of song pure and simple, which set in with Scarlatti, the founder of the Neapolitan school, whose first opera was produced a little over two centuries ago. From this time dates the supremacy, in Italy, of the *bel canto*, or beautiful song, which, however, gradually degenerated into mere circus music in which every artistic aim was deliberately sacrificed to sensuous tone-revelry and agility of execution, the voice being treated as a mere instrument, without any regard for its higher prerogative of interpreting poetry and heightening its effects.

This period of Italian song prevailed throughout Europe until the time of Rossini. And in all the annals of music there is nothing quite so strange as the extraordinary craze which existed during this time for *the instrumental style of vocalism*. A special class of singers—the male sopranists—was artificially created, in order to secure the most dazzling results in brilliant, ornamental vocalization. Various kinds of trills, grace notes, runs, and other species of *fioriture*, or vocal somersaults, were introduced in every song, in such profusion that the song itself was at last barely recognizable ; and this kind of stuff the audiences of that time applauded frantically. Everybody has heard of the vulgar circus tricks performed by the most famous of the

sopranists, Farinelli—how at one time he beat a famous German trumpeter in prolonging and swelling his notes, and how, at another time, he began an aria softly, swelled it by imperceptible degrees to such an astounding volume, and then decreased it again in the same way to pianissimo, that the public wildly applauded him for five minutes. Thereupon, Dr. Burney relates, he began to sing with such amazing rapidity that the orchestra found it difficult to keep up with him. Dr. Dommer justly comments on this story that, for such racing with an orchestra, a singer would be hissed to-day by musical people.

It was not only quick and animated songs that were thus overloaded with meaningless embroideries by the sopranists and the prima donnas that followed them. Slow movements, which ought to breathe a spirit of melancholy, appear to have been especially selected as background for these vocal fireworks. I need not dwell on the unnaturalness of this style. To run up and down the scale wildly and persistently in singing a slow and sad song, is as consistent as it would be for an orator to grin and yodle while delivering a funeral oration.

A question might be raised as to how far the great Italian composers are responsible for this degradation of the vocal art to the level of the circus. The public, it might be argued, wanted the

florid style of song; and if Rossini and Donizetti had refused to write in the style admired by them, they would have been neglected in favor of other and less gifted composers. I do not agree with this reasoning. Rossini and Donizetti have revealed enough genius in some of their sparkling melodies to make it probable that, if they had not so often stooped to the level of a taste corrupted by the sopranists, they might have raised the public to a higher standard of musical taste. Rossini, in fact, *did* introduce many reforms in Italian opera. He enriched the orchestral accompaniments, removed some of the superfluous arias, and for the first time wrote leading solo parts for the bass—an innovation for which he was violently attacked, on the ludicrous conservative ground that the bass could only be properly used as a basis of harmonies. But Rossini's greatest merit lies in this, that he refused to write for the sopranists, and would not even let them sing in those of his operas which were brought out under his own supervision. Furthermore, to prevent the singers from spoiling his melodies with their florid additions, "he supplied his own decorations, and made them so elaborate that the most skilled adorner would have found it difficult to add to them" (Edwards). For thus emancipating the composers from the tyranny of the singers Rossini deserves great credit, and still greater honor is due him

for having shown, in his "William Tell," which he wrote for Paris, and in which he discarded the florid style, that when he *did* have a public which appreciated simplicity of style and dramatic propriety in music, his genius was equal to the occasion. It is a great pity that he did not write several more operas in the style of "William Tell," for it is the only one of his works which has preserved a portion of its former popularity in Paris and elsewhere, thanks to its regard for dramatic propriety.

Like the composers, the singing teachers in Italy consented to adapt their method to the universal clamor for decorative, florid singing. The audiences did not seem to care at all *what* was sung to them, as long as it was sung with sensuous beauty of tone, and facility of execution; consequently sensuous beauty of tone and facility of execution were almost the only things that the teachers aimed at. This is illustrated by an anecdote concerning the famous teacher Porpora and his pupil Caffarelli, which, although doubtless exaggerated, nevertheless describes the situation graphically. Porpora, it is related, gave Caffarelli a page of exercises to which he confined him for five years. And at the end of that time he exclaimed: "You have nothing more to learn! Caffarelli is the first singer in the world!"

As if facility of execution or technical skill were not the mere beginning of vocal culture—the fash-

ioning of the instrument, as it were, with which the singer must subsequently learn the higher arts of expressing human emotions in tones, of phrasing intelligently, and of pronouncing distinctly, so that the poetic qualities of the text may be appreciated.

In looking over specimens of the vocal music written by Porpora and his contemporaries, we find passages in which a single syllable is extended over one hundred and fifty-eight, and even a hundred and seventy-five, notes. A more atrocious maltreatment of the text, and misconception of the true function of the human voice, could not be imagined. As Mr. H. C. Deacon remarks, "The passages in much of the music of that date, especially that of Porpora, are really instrumental passages. . . . and possessing but little interest beyond the surprise that their exact performance would create." People did not ask themselves whether it was worth while for singers to go through the most arduous training for five years, for the sake of learning to execute runs which any fiddler or flute-player could learn to play in a few weeks. Look at the fioriture which, to this day, Mme. Patti sings in "Lucia," "Semiramide," etc. She is the only living being who can sing them with absolute correctness and smoothness. Not another singer can do it—whereas *every member of her orchestra can play them at sight.* Does not this show, once and for all, that this style of

singing (which still has numerous admirers) is instrumental, is unvocal, unsuited to the human voice, and should be abandoned forever? Rossini showed his real opinion of it by writing his best and most mature work in a different style; and Verdi has done the same in "Aida" and "Otello," in which there is hardly a trace of colorature, while the style often approaches to that of genuine dramatic song.

The colorature or florid style, however, is only one of the varieties of Italian song. Side by side with it there has always been a charming, melodious *cantabile*, which in the later period of Italian opera gradually got the ascendency. This *cantabile* is often of exquisite beauty, and gives Italian and Italianized singers a chance to show off the mellow qualities of their voices to the best advantage. The very word *cantabile* emphasizes, by antithesis, the unvocal character of the old florid style. *Fioritura* means embroidery, while *cantabile* means "song-like." But now, note how the sins of one period are visited on the next. The evils of the florid style did not terminate with its supremacy. They cast a shadow before, which prevented the real nature of human song from being discovered even after the vocal style had become more simple and rational. During the period in which the vocalists were in the habit of singing from a dozen to a hundred or more notes to a single syllable of the text, they, as well as

the public, had become so indifferent to the words and their poetic meaning, that this habit could not at once be altered when the *cantabile* style came more into vogue. The singers continued to be careless in regard to pronunciation of the words, and the opera libretti were so very silly that the public really did not care whether the singers spoke their words correctly and distinctly or not. Hence even the *cantabile* style of Italian song continued to be more or less instrumental in character—telling the audience little more about the text than the flute or the violins told them about it.

Mrs. Wodehouse, in her article on song in Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians," calls attention to the injurious action of Italian opera on the English School by breeding indifference to the text. "From Handel's time until a very recent date," she says, "Italian operas and Italian songs reigned supreme in England; Italian singers and Italian teachers were masters of the situation to the exclusion of all others. And the habit thus contracted of hearing and admiring compositions in a foreign and unknown tongue, engendered in the English public a lamentable indifference to the words of songs, which reacted with evil effect both on the composer and the singer. Concerned only to please the ears of his audience, the composer neglected to wed his music to words of true poetic

merit; and the singer quickly grew to be careless in his enunciation. Of how many singers, and even of good ones, may it not fairly be affirmed that at the end of the song the audience has failed to recognize its language?"

These remarks are quite as applicable to America as to England. We hear singers every week to whom we can listen attentively for five minutes without being able to tell what language they are singing in. Most of these singers were trained by the Italian method: And yet we are told every day that this Italian method, which has so little regard for the distinctively vocal side of singing, is the only true method for the voice. It is time to call a halt in this matter, time to ask if the Italian method is really the one best adapted for teaching pupils to sing in English. That it is the best and only method for singing in Italian, and for interpreting the style hitherto cultivated by the Italians, no one will deny. But whether it is the proper method for those who wish to sing in English, French, or German, and to devote themselves to the modern dramatic style, is quite another question, which must be, partly at least, answered in the negative.

A careful examination of the situation, leaving aside all national prejudice, will show us that each of the two principal methods, as exemplified by Ital-

ian and German singers, has its dark and its bright side, and that the cosmopolitan American style of the future ought to try to combine the advantages of both, while avoiding their shortcomings. The dark side of Italian singing has been sufficiently dwelt upon; let us now consider the bright side.

Italy owes much of her fame as the cradle of artistic song and "The Lord's own Conservatory," to climatic and linguistic advantages. Thanks to the mild climate, men and women can spend most of their time in the open air, and their voices are not liable to be ruined by constantly passing from a dry, overheated room into the raw and chilly air of the streets. The Italians are a plump race, with well-developed muscles, and their vocal chords share in the general muscular health and development; so that the average voice in Italy has a much wider compass than in most other countries; and an unctuous ease of execution is readily acquired. Their language, again, favors Italian singers quite as much as their climate. It abounds in the most sonorous of the vowels, while generally avoiding the difficult U, and the mixed vowels Ö and Ü, as well as the harsh consonants, which are almost always sacrificed to euphony. And where the language hesitates to make this sacrifice, the vocalists come to the rescue and facilitate matters by arbitrarily changing the difficult vowel or consonant into an

easy one. In this they are encouraged by the teachers, who habitually neglect the less sonorous vowels and make their pupils sing all their exercises on the easy vowel A. No wonder, then, that the tones of an Italian singer commonly sound sweet: he makes them up of nothing but pure sugar. Characterization, dramatic effect, variety of emotional coloring, are all bartered away for sensuous beauty of tone; and hence the distinctive name for Italian singing—*bel canto*, or beautiful song—is very aptly chosen.

Now, sensuous beauty of tone is a most desirable thing in music. Wagner's music, *e.g.*, owes much of its tonic charm to his fine instinct for sensuous orchestral coloring, and Chopin's works lose half their characteristic beauty if played on a poor piano, or by one who does not know how to use the pedal in such a way as to produce a continuous stream of rich saturated sound. Hence the Italians deserve full credit for the attention they bestow on sensuous beauty of tone, even if their means of securing it may not always be approved. Nor does this by any means exhaust the catalogue of Italian virtues. As a rule, Italian singers have a better ear for pitch, breathe more naturally, and execute more easily than German and French singers, whose guttural and nasal sounds they also avoid. The difference between the average Italian and German singers is well brought

out by Dr. Hanslick, in speaking of the Italian performances which formerly used to alternate with the German operas in Vienna: "Most of our Italian guests," he says, "distinguish themselves by means of the thorough command they have over their voices, which in themselves are by no means imposing; our German members by powerful voices, which, however, owing to their insufficient training, do not produce half the effect they would if they had been subjected to the same amount of training. With the Italians great certainty and evenness throughout the rôle; with the Germans an unequal alternation of brilliant and mediocre moments, which seems partly accidental."

It is this element of accident and uncertainty that lowers the value of many German singers. Herr Niemann, for instance, has moments—and, indeed, whole evenings—when his voice, seemingly rejuvenated, not only rises to sublime heights of dramatic passion, but possesses rare sensuous beauty; while on other occasions the sound of his voice is almost unbearable. Niemann, of course, is fifty-eight years old, but many of the younger German singers too often have their bad quarter-hours; and even Lilli Lehmann—whom I would rather hear for my own pleasure than any other singer now on the stage—emits occasionally a disagreeable guttural sound. Nothing of the sort in Mme. Patti, whom Niemann

no doubt is right in pronouncing the most perfect vocalist, not only of this period, but of all times. I, for my part, have never cared much for the *bel canto* as such, because it is so often wasted on trashy compositions. Yet, when I heard Mme. Patti for the first time in New York, I could not help indulging in the following rhapsody: "The ordinary epithets applicable to a voice, such as sweet, sympathetic, flexible, expressive, sound almost too commonplace to be applied to Patti's voice at its best, as it was when she sang the *valse* Ombra Leggiera from 'Dinora,' and 'Home, Sweet Home.' Her voice has a natural sensuous charm like a Cremona violin, which it is a pleasure to listen to, irrespective of what she happens to be singing. It is a pleasure, too, to hear under what perfect control she has it; how, without changing the quality of the sound, she passes from a high to a low note, from piano to forte, gradually or suddenly, and all without the least sense of effort. Indeed her notes are as spontaneous and natural as those of a nightingale; and this, combined with their natural sweetness and purity, constitutes their great charm." A few months later, when Patti gave one of her innumerable farewell performances, I was again forced to admit that she is the greatest of living lyric sopranos, but took the liberty to express my conviction that "the charm of her voice is almost as purely sensuous as the beauty of a dewdrop or a

diamond reflecting the prismatic colors of sunlight."

Patti, in a word, is the incarnation of the Italian style. Her voice is flawless as regards beauty of tone, and spontaneity and agility of execution. Moreover, she avoids the small vices common to most Italian singers, such as taking liberties with the time and the sentiment of the piece for the sake of prolonging a trill or a loud final high note, and so on. At an early stage in her career she followed the custom of the time, and lavished such an abundance of uncalled-for scales and trills and arpeggios and staccatos on her melody, that even Rossini entered a sarcastic protest; but in her later years she has conscientiously followed the indications of the composers. At the same time, she has shown more and more anxiety to win laurels as a dramatic singer. But here the vocal style which she has exclusively cultivated has proved an insuperable obstacle. Although free from the smaller vices of the Italian school, she could not overcome the great and fatal shortcoming of that school—the maltreatment of the poetic text. She could not find the proper accents required in operas where the words of the text are as important as the melody itself; and she has failed therefore to give satisfaction even in such works as "Faust" and "Aïda," which are intermediate between the old-fashioned opera and the music-drama

proper. I have been often surprised to hear how Patti, so conscientious in other respects, slights her texts, obliterating consonants and altering vowels after the fashion of the Italian school. Having neglected to master the more vigorous vowels and expressive consonants, she cannot assert her art in dramatic works. Her voice, in short, is *merely an instrument.* "Bird-like" is an epithet commonly applied to it by admirers. Is this a compliment? A dubious one, in my opinion. The nightingale's voice is very sweet, no doubt, but it is no better than a flute. A bird cannot pronounce words and sing at the same time. The human voice alone can do that —can alone combine poetry and music, uniting the advantage of both in one effect.

On the other hand, have you ever heard anyone compare the voices of Lehmann, Materna, Sucher, or Malten to a bird's voice? Of course not; and the reason is obvious. The point of view is different. Although Lilli Lehmann's voice is almost as mellow in timbre as Patti's, and much richer and warmer, we never think of it as a bird-like or vague instrumental tone, but as a medium for the expression of definite dramatic emotion. And herein lies the chief difference between the Italian and the German schools. *An Italian adores singing for its own sake, a German as a means of definite emotional expression.*

Now, whether we look at nations or at individuals,

we always find that simple beauty of tone and agility of execution in artistic singing are appreciated sooner than emotional expression and dramatic characterization. Hence it is that the Italian school came before the German school. Even in Germany, a few generations ago, the Italian school was so predominant that German composers of the first rank —Gluck, Weber, and Beethoven—found it difficult to assert their influence against it. In Vienna, during the season of 1823, the Rossini furore was so great that none but Rossini's operas were sung; and in Germany almost everyone of the three dozen big and little potentates supported his own Italian operatic company. To-day you look in vain through Germany or Austria for a single Italian company. The few Italian operas that have remained on the repertory are sung in German translations by German singers, and all of these operas together hardly have as many performances in a year as a single one of Wagner's.

Here is a revolution in taste which may well excite our astonishment, and arouse our curiosity as to how it was brought about. It was brought about by the courage and perseverance of a few composers who, instead of stooping down to the crude taste of the *fioriture*-loving public, elevated that taste until it was able to appreciate the poetic and dramatic side of music; and it was brought about with the

assistance of German singers, notwithstanding the great disadvantages, climatic and linguistic, under which these labor in comparison with Italian singers.

Although the Germans are a more robust nation than the Italians, with more powerful muscles and voices, their climate is against them, leading to frequent throat troubles which endanger the beauty of the voice. Hence, the gift of mellow, supple song does not come to them so spontaneously as to the Italians. About a thousand years ago, an Italian compared the singing of some German monks to the noise made by a cart rattling down a frozen street; and even Luther compared the singing in cathedrals and monasteries at his time to the "braying of asses." At a more recent period, Frederick the Great, on hearing of the proposed engagement of a German singer, exclaimed: "What! hear a German singer! I should as soon expect to derive pleasure from the neighing of my horse!" Beethoven knew that the chief reason why he could not compete with Rossini on the stage was the lack of good German singers. He often lamented the inferiority of the German to the Italian singers, and one day exclaimed to the organist Freudenberg: "We Germans have no sufficiently cultivated singers for the part of *Leonora;* they are too cold and feelingless. The Italians sing and act with their whole souls." Nevertheless, Beethoven refused to adapt his music to the style of

the Italian singers—fortunately; for, if he had, it would now be as obsolete as most of Rossini's and Donizetti's.

When Berlioz made his famous tour in Germany, matters had somewhat improved, to judge from the following remarks in his "À Travers Chants:" "They say that the Germans sing badly; that may seem true in general. I will not broach the question here, whether or not their language is the reason of it, and whether Mme. Sontag, Pischek, Tichatschek, Mlle. Lind, who is almost a German, and many others, do not form magnificent exceptions; but, upon the whole, German vocalists sing, and do not howl; the screaming school is not theirs; they make music." Nevertheless, about the same time, Liszt complained that a perfect training of the voice such as he admired in Viardot-Garcia, had almost become a legend of the past; and only eight years ago, an excellent German critic, Martin Plüddemann, wrote that "Germany has many good orchestras and not a few excellent pianists, even among amateurs; but a city of 100,000 inhabitants seldom has ten vocalists whose voices are tolerable, and of these two or three at most deserve the name of artists."

When Richard Wagner made his preparation for the great Nibelung festival in 1876, he had the greatest difficulty in securing a sufficient number of com-

petent interpreters for the different rôles of the trilogy, though he had all the German opera companies to choose from. His private letters and essays are full of lamentations regarding the rarity of singers able to interpret, not only his works, but those of Weber, Gluck, or Mozart. Good singers, he says in one place, are so rare that the managers have to pay their weight in gold and jewelry. But the cause of this, he continues, is not the lack of good voices, but their improper training in the wrong direction. German teachers have tried to adapt the voices of their pupils to the Italian *canto*, which is incompatible with the German language. "Hitherto," he says in another place, "the voice has been trained exclusively after the model of Italian songs; there was no other. But the character of Italian songs was determined by the general spirit of Italian music, which, in the time of its full bloom, was best exemplified by the sopranists, because the aim of this music was mere enjoyment of the senses, without any regard for genuine depth of feeling—as is also shown by the fact that the voice of young manhood, the tenor voice, was hardly used at all at this period, and later only in a sopranistic way, as falsetto. Now, the spirit of modern music, under the undisputed leadership of German genius, especially Beethoven, has succeeded in first rising to the true dignity of art, by bringing within the sphere of its

incomparable expressiveness, not only what is agreeable to the senses, but also an energetic spirituality and emotional depth." Evidently, he concludes, a singer trained in the spirit of the old-fashioned, merely sensuous music, is unable to cope with modern dramatic music, and the result is the failure and premature collapse of so many promising singers, who might have become great artists had they been rationally instructed.

Misinformed or prejudiced critics have told us countless times that Wagner assigned the voice a secondary place in his works because he cared less for it than for the orchestra, and did not understand its nature and uses. The fact is that no one can read his essays, especially those on Schnorr von Carolsfeld, and on Actors and Vocalists, without being impressed with his unbounded admiration for the voice, and his practical knowledge of its highest functions and correct use. As a vocal teacher, Wagner has perhaps never had an equal. A few words from him regarding tone emission, breathing, or phrasing, have often sufficed to show to a singer that a passage which he had considered unsingable, was really the easiest thing in the world, if only the poetic sense were properly grasped and the breath economized. It is difficult to realize how much of their art and popularity the greatest dramatic singers of the period owe to Wagner's personal in-

struction. Materna, Malten, Brandt, Tichatschek, Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Niemann, Vogl, Winkelmann, Betz, Scaria, Reichmann, and many others have had the benefit of his advice; and if Wagner could have carried out his plans of establishing a college of dramatic singing at Bayreuth—a plan which was frustrated by the lack of funds—the cause of dramatic art would have gained immeasurably. We speak with scornful contempt of the Viennese of a former generation, who allowed a rare genius like Schubert to starve; but posterity will look back with quite as great astonishment on the sluggishness of a generation which did not eagerly accept the offer of the greatest dramatic composer of all times, to instruct gratuitously a number of pupils in his own style and those of Gluck, Mozart, and Weber.

Leaving out of consideration the instructions which they personally received from Wagner, the greatest dramatic singers of the time may be regarded as self-made men and women. Experience taught them their art, other teacher they had none; for it is only within a few years that a few teachers have begun to realize that the old methods of instruction are partly incorrect, and partly insufficient for the demands of contemporary art. Such teachers as Mme. Viardot-Garcia and Mme. Marchesi have done much good, and trained many excellent lyric

vocalists; but Mme. Marchesi herself admits that the great demand to-day is for dramatic, and not for lyric, singers. Formerly, it was the *bravura* singer who bought dukedoms with his shekels; to-day, with the solitary exception of Patti, it is the *dramatic* soprano or tenor that gets from $500 to $1,000 a night. When will teachers and pupils wake up and recognize the new situation? When will American girls cease flocking by the hundreds to Milan to learn such rôles as *Lucia* or *Amina*, for which there is now no demand, either in Europe or America, if we except the wild Western audiences to which Emma Abbott caters. A good *Elsa* or *Brünnhilde* will get an engagement ten times sooner than a good *Lucia;* and young vocalists whose voices have not sufficient volume and power to cope with German dramatic music, will do well to devote their attention to the better class of French operas, for which there is a growing demand, as the French style has always been much more like the German than like the Italian, owing to the great attention paid by French composers, especially since the days of Gluck, to vigorous declamation and distinct enunciation. Wagner especially recommends the works of the older French schools as a preparation for his own more difficult operas.

Director Stanton, of the Metropolitan Opera House, in New York, is obliged every summer to make a

trip to Germany and look about for dramatic singers wherewith to replenish his casts. As a number of American singers have already won fame here and abroad, the time no doubt will come when he will be able to find the dramatic singers he needs at home, and when opera in English will have supplanted foreign opera, so far as the language is concerned. But until that happy epoch arrives every aspirant to operatic honors cannot be too strongly urged to begin his or her studies by learning the French and German languages. Almost all the greatest singers of the century have been able not only to sing but to speak in several languages. Above all things, students of song should learn to speak their own language. Mr. H. C. Deacon remarks that "no nation in the civilized world speaks its language so abominably as the English. . . . Familiar conversation is carried on in inarticulate smudges of sound which are allowed to pass current for something, as worn-out shillings are accepted as representatives of twelvepence. . . . When English people begin to study singing, they are astonished to find that they have never learned to speak."

Mr. Deacon's strictures do not apply in all their force to Americans, for the average American speaks English more distinctly than the average Englishman; yet there is room for vast improvement in the enunciation of our singers. Now, the great value

of the German style to English students lies in this, that it emphasizes above all things the importance of correct and distinct speech in song. Julius Hey, of Munich, who has just published a vocal method which will mark an epoch in the teaching of singing, devotes the whole of his first volume to an analysis of the elements of speech, and to exercises in speaking. The second and third volumes contain vocal exercises for male and female voices, while the fourth volume, which has just appeared, discusses the special characteristics of the German dramatic method, and gives detailed instructions for the development and training of each variety of voice, together with an appendix in which some of the most popular operatic rôles are analyzed and described. It is a book which no teacher or student who wishes to keep abreast of the times can afford to be without.

Although Herr Hey is a disciple of Wagner, he is a cosmopolitan admirer of all that is good in every style of the past and present. In the elaborate scheme for the establishment of a conservatory in Munich which Wagner submitted to King Ludwig, he dwells on the fact that every student of song, whatever his ultimate aims, should be instructed in Italian singing, in conjunction with the Italian language. Herr Hey, too, admits that there is no branch of the Italian method which the German teachers can afford to ignore. In the emission of a

mellow tone, the use of the portamento, in the treatment of scales, of trills, and of other ornaments, and in facile vocalization in general, all nations can learn from the Italians. But the Italian method does not go far enough. It does not meet the demands of the modern opera and the modern music-drama. It delights too much in comfortable solfeggios, in linked sweetness long drawn out, which soon palls on the senses. The modern romantic and dramatic spirit demands more characteristic, more vigorous, more varied accents than Italian song supplies. These dramatic accents are supplied by the German method, and in this chiefly lies its superiority over the Italian method.

Herr Hey uses a very happy comparison in trying to show the bad consequences of relying too much on the Italian principles of vocal instruction which have been current until lately in Germany as in all other countries. Students, he says, are taught to fence with a little walking-cane, and when it comes to the decisive battle they are expected to wield a heavy sword. A most happy illustration this, I repeat, for it indicates exactly what vocal teachers of the old school are doing. They choose the easiest of the vowels and the easiest melodic intervals, and make the pupils exercise on those constantly, ignoring the more difficult ones; and the consequence is, that when, subsequently, the pupils are confronted

with difficult intervals in a dramatic rôle, they sing them badly and make the ludicrous protest that the composer "doesn't know how to write for the voice;" and when they come across difficult vowels they either change them into easier ones, and thus make the text unintelligible, or else they emit a crude tone because they have never learned to sing a sonorous U, I, or E (Latin).

The German principle, on the other hand, is that all vowels (and the German language has a greater number of them than the Italian) must be cultivated equally, the difficult ones all the more because they are difficult. Herr Hey has found in practice that not only can the vowels which at first sound dull and hollow, like U, be made as sonorous as A (Ah), but that, by practising on U, the A itself is rendered more sonorous than it can ever become by exclusive practice on it alone. Not only does the German method in this way secure a greater variety of sonorous vowel sounds, useful for the expression of different dramatic moods, but the registers are equalized, and there is a great gain in the power and endurance of the voice, which is of immense importance today in grand opera.

Prof. Stockhausen, the distinguished vocal teacher, recently remarked in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* that "the *mezza voce* is the natural song, the constant loud singing being only a struggle with unequal

weapons against our modern orchestra." No doubt he is right. But the orchestra has become such an important factor in modern opera that musicians would be unwilling to have it reduced in size—the tendency being, in fact, the other way; and at the same time opera is such an expensive luxury that it can only be made to pay in a very large theatre, which obliges the singers to have stentorian voices. Consequently, the German method, which develops the power and the sonority of the voice on *every* vowel, is the method of the future, all the more because the English language, which is the world language of the future, is even more difficult for vocal purposes than the German, and calls for similar treatment.

In the treatment of consonants, the German method marks a still greater advance on the Italian method. Professor Ehrlich thinks that the reason why Italians care so much for melody and so little for harmony is because they are too indolent to make the mental effort which is required to follow a complicated harmonic score. They are, certainly, too lazy to pronounce any harsh or difficult consonants, and the Italian language therefore presents a picture of sad effeminate degeneracy compared with the more vigorous Latin and even Spanish. Now the English language and the English character have much more of German vigor and masculine strength

than of the Italian *dolce far niente:* hence, the English vocal style of the future will have to be modelled after the German style, which, instead of shirking difficult consonants boldly tackles and utilizes them. It will never be possible to sing so sweetly in the English and German languages as in Italian; but it is possible to sing with much more vigor, dramatic definiteness, and variety of emotional expression.

At the same time, the harshness of the consonants in German and English song must not be too much emphasized. Wagner has shown in his music-dramas, and Hey in his vocal method, that by means of a proper division of syllables and correct articulation, the harshness of consonants can be toned down as much as is desirable. On the desirability and effectiveness of strong consonants Liszt has some admirable remarks in speaking of the Polish language, which is noted for its melodious beauty, although it bristles with consonants: "The harshness of a language," he says, "is by no means always conditioned by the excessive number of consonants, but rather by the way in which they are united; one might almost say that the weak, cold color of some languages is due to the lack of characteristic and strongly accented sounds. It is only an unharmonious combination of dissimilar consonants that offends a refined ear. The frequent return of cer-

tain well-united consonants gives shading, rhythm, and vigor to language; whereas the predominance of vowels produces a certain pallor in the coloration, which needs the contrast of darker tints."

Those who are always ready to insist on the superiority of the Italian language for song, would do well to ponder these remarks of Liszt, who knew what he was talking about, as he spoke a number of modern languages fluently. And when they have done that, they should procure a few of Wagner's later vocal scores and note the extremely ingenious manner in which he has made the peculiarities of German consonants subservient to his dramatic purposes. I refer especially to his use of alliteration—the repetition of a consonant in the same or in consecutive lines. This not only insures a smooth, melodious flow, but enables the composer to heighten the effect of any situation by choosing consonants that harmonize with it. What, for instance, could be more delightfully descriptive than the words sung by the three Rhine daughters as they merrily swim and gambol under the water in "Rheingold:"

"Weia! Waga!
Woge, du Welle,
Walle zur Wiege!
Wagalaweia!
Wallala, weiala, weia!"

One need only look at this, without understanding the language, to feel the rhythmic motion of the water, and imagine the song of the merry maidens. Again, in the famous love duo in the "Walküre," note the repetition of the liquid consonants, the l's and m's, which give the sound such a soft and sentimental background. Does it not seem incredible that the Italian operatic composers should have ignored such poetic means of deepening the emotional color of their songs?

But this is by no means all. In the same scene in "Rheingold" to which reference has just been made, the ugly Nibelung *Alberich* appears presently and tries to catch one of the lovely maidens. But they elude his grasp and he angrily complains that he slips and slides on the slimy soil. Note the slippery character of these sounds:

"Garstig glatter
Glitschriger Glimmer!
Wie Gleit ich aus!
Mit Händen und Füssen
Nicht fasse noch halt'ich
Das schlecke Geschlüpfer."

There is a real Volapük for you—a world language which all can understand, for it is onomatopoetic realism.

Of course it is not "beautiful;" but is that a

reasonable objection? What would you say to an artist who painted dramatic battle-scenes, but made all the soldiers' faces as pretty as he could and adorned with sweet smiles? *That* is precisely what the Italian opera composers have done in stage music; and it is because Wagner taught the singer to express not only *sweet* sentiments but *all* dramatic emotions, whether harsh or agreeable, that his new style marks an epoch in the evolution of the art of singing. At the same time, even these harsher passages in Wagner's vocal music are not really ugly, that is, disagreeable to the ear, *when properly sung.* Just as a homely face becomes attractive when it expresses a vivid emotion, so the harshest vocal measures in the realistic music-drama become a source of enjoyment if they are sung *with expression.*

Unfortunately, there are only a few artists as yet who have sufficiently caught Wagner's intentions to be able to sing in this manner. Carl Hill, who created the part of the magician *Klingsor* at the Parsifal Festival, in 1882, was one of these exceptions. He reflected the spirit of the gruesome text assigned to him so admirably that Wagner was delighted; but afterward he complained that Hill's fine impersonation was not so widely appreciated as it deserved to be; and why? Apparently, because *Klingsor's* melodic intervals were not pleasing, nor his sentiments sympathetic.

We must conclude from this that, in regard to dramatic singing, many opera-goers are still a good deal like the honest Scotchman who, on his first visit to a theatre, climbed on the stage and administered the villain of the play a sound thrashing; or, like the Bowery audiences, which applaud the good man in the play, no matter how badly he acts, and hiss the villain, though he be a second Salvini.

Until operatic audiences begin to understand that singing is commendable in proportion as it gives realistic expression, not only to sweet and pleasing moods, but to various kinds of dramatic emotion, the full grandeur and value of Wagner's vocal style cannot be appreciated. A real epicure does not care to eat cakes and candy all the time; he loves olives and caviare too. These may be acquired tastes, but all taste for high art is acquired. And the time is, apparently, not very distant when Wagner's realistic vocal style will no longer be caviare even to the public at large, but will be more enjoyed —even when it gives expression to emotions of anger, jealousy, and revenge—than the cloying, sugar-coated melodies of Bellini and Rossini, or those meaningless embroideries which even some of the best of the older Italians (Tosi, for example) regarded as the most beautiful part of song.

The great enthusiasm frequently shown at performances of Wagner's operas in other countries as

well as in Germany, seems to argue that the public at large *has* already entered into the real spirit and meaning of the Wagnerian style of singing. But numerous experiences lead me to believe the contrary. Allow me to quote, for example, an extract from one of those letters, abusive or censorious, which musical editors receive almost daily. "Is it not undeniable," writes a correspondent, "that as long as the world lasts, one of its greatest delights will consist in listening to the music furnished by the human voice? The more highly cultivated, pure, sweet, and flexible the voice, the more the enjoyment derived. And is it not equally true that Wagner's style of music discourages singing of this sort, or, in fact, singing of any sort? Are not the principal features of Wagner's operas the orchestra, acting, and general *mise-en-scène*, and does not singing, pure and simple, have but little part in it?"

If the writer of these questions had asked them in Wagner's presence I believe that Wagner would have jumped up and boxed his ears. Nothing so irritated him as this notion that the singing in his operas is subordinate to the orchestra, or, in other words, that he puts the statue in the orchestra and the pedestal on the stage. As early as 1850, he complained to Liszt about his friend Dingelstedt, who, in his article on the first performance of "Lohengrin," had expressed a similar opinion. And

many years later, in writing of Schnorr von Carolsfeld's wonderful impersonation of *Tristan*, he begs the reader to note that the last act of this work contains "an exuberance of orchestral devices, such as no simple instrumental composer has ever had occasion to call into use. Then assure yourself," he continues, "that this complete gigantic orchestra, considered from an operatic point of view, is, after all, only related as *accompaniment* to the 'solo' part represented by the monologue of the vocalist, who lies on his couch; and infer from this the significance of Schnorr's impersonation, if I call to witness every conscientious spectator at those Munich performances, that, from the first bar to the last, the attention and interest of all was centred on the vocalist actor, was chained to him, and never allowed a single word of the text to escape through a momentary absence of mind; and that the orchestra, as compared with the singer, completely disappeared, or, more correctly speaking, seemed to be a constituent part of his song."

I have never had the privilege of hearing Schnorr, but I heard Scaria repeatedly at Bayreuth and Vienna, and he always impressed on me, in the manner here described by Wagner, the supreme importance of the vocal part in his scores. Not a word of the text was lost, and in the most difficult intervals his voice was always beautifully and smoothly

modulated. He enabled me to realize for the first time, the truth of what Wagner said regarding his vocal style, in the following words: "In my operas there is no difference between phrases that are 'declaimed' and 'sung,' but my declamation is at the same time song, and my song declamation." Scaria's method also afforded an eloquent illustration of the wonderful manner in which, in Wagner's vocal style, the melodic accent always falls on the proper rhetorical accent of each word of the text, which is one of the secrets of clear enunciation. He emphasized important syllables by dwelling on them, thus producing that dramatic *rubato* which Wagner considered of such great importance in his operas that, when he brought out "Tannhäuser" in Dresden, he actually had the words of the text copied into the parts of all the orchestral players, in order that they might be able to follow these poetic licenses in the dramatic phrasing of the singer. This dramatic *rubato* is, of course, a very different thing from the freedom which Italian singers often allow themselves on favorable high notes, which they prolong, not in order to emphasize an emotion but to show off the beauty and sustaining power of their voices.

Scaria, unfortunately, was never heard in opera in this country. But we have had Materna and Niemann and Brandt and Fischer, and Alvary and Leh-

mann, who have given us correct ideas of the German vocal style. Surely no one can say, on listening to Lehmann's *Brünnhilde*, or Fischer's *Hans Sachs*, or Alvary's *Siegfried*, that the vocal part is inferior in beauty or importance to the orchestral. When Alvary sang *Siegfried* for the first time in New York, he presented a creditable but uneven impersonation, not having sufficiently mastered the details of the acting to feel quite at ease, and not being able to husband his vocal resources for the grand duo at the close. But at the end of the season, at the eleventh performance, he had become a full-fledged *Siegfried*, acting the part as by instinct, while his voice was as fresh at the close of the opera as at the beginning: thus affording a striking proof of Wagner's assertion, that the greatest vocal difficulties of his rôles can be readily mastered if the singer will only take the pains to enter thoroughly into the spirit of the text and the dramatic situations. Alvary spent a whole year in learning this rôle, availing himself of the hints given him by Herr Seidl, who has the Wagnerian traditions by heart; and to-day he might, if he felt so inclined, amass wealth and win honor by travelling about Europe and singing nothing but this one rôle. Vienna and Brussels made strenuous efforts to entice him away from New York after his great success as *Siegfried*.

This success is the more gratifying and encour-

aging because, previously, he had been only a second-rate singer. It was his conscientious and prolonged study of the German vocal style that enabled him to win his present lucrative and honorable position. If there were a few more young singers like him the operatic problem might be considered solved, for it is the rarity of well-trained singers that causes all the financial embarrassment in our opera-houses. They are so scarce, that as soon as one is discovered he is hurried on the stage, after a year's hasty preparation, and if his untrained voice soon gives out—as it must under the circumstances—the blame is laid on Wagner's shoulders. But, as Mme. Lucca remarks, "neither Wagner nor any other composer spoils the voice of any one who knows how to sing." She thinks that at least six years of faithful study are necessary to develop the voice in accordance with artistic principles. Herr Hey is somewhat more lenient, three years of thorough training sufficing, in his opinion, as a preparation for the stage. Much, of course, depends on individuals, and the number of hours given to study every day. In the old Italian vocal schools, two centuries ago, the pupils were kept busy six or eight hours a day, devoting one hour to difficult passages, another to trills and to accuracy of intonation, others to expression, to counterpoint, composition and accompaniment, etc. They often prac-

tised before a mirror in order to study the position of the soft parts in the mouth, and to avoid grimaces ; and sometimes they sang at places where there was a good echo, so as to hear their own faults, as if some one else were singing. Yet, as we have seen, the main stress was laid on agility of technical execution, whereas the modern German method, without in the least neglecting technique, calls upon pupils to devote more attention to the principles of soulful expression and dramatic accentuation. A singer who wishes to appear to advantage as *Euryanthe* or *Lohengrin* or *Tristan* must not only be entirely familiar with his own vocal parts but he ought to be as familiar with the orchestral score as the conductor himself : for, only then, can he acquire that ease which is necessary for producing a deep impression. As he has not the conductor's advantage of looking on the printed score while singing, he must therefore have an excellent memory. As Dr. Hanslick remarks, " the artists who sing ' Tristan and Isolde ' by heart, if they do nothing more than sing the notes correctly, deserve our most sincere admiration. That they can do to-day what seemed almost impossible twenty years ago is indeed Wagner's achievement, an achievement which has hardly been noted hitherto." Let me add that in modern German music, *everything* is difficult to the singer—the consonants of the language, the unusual intervals

and accents, the necessity of being actor and singer at the same time, etc. Hence we ought to be charitable and condone an occasional slip. But the average opera-goer in this country is anything but charitable. If one of these dramatic singers, thus hampered by difficulties, makes the slightest lapse from tonal beauty (which may be even called for) he is judged as unmercifully as if he were a representative of the *bel canto*, whose art consists in a mere voice without emotion—*vox et præterea nihil.* This is as unfair as it is to judge Wagner's dramas by the music alone, and is, indeed a consequence of this attitude.

It has been too much the habit in America and in England to sneer at German singers; and it is customary if a German singer has a good mellow voice to attribute that to his Italian method, while his shortcomings are ascribed to the German method. This, again, is as absurd as it is unjust; for, as I have endeavored to show, the real German method, by insisting on an equal treatment of all the vowels, develops a richer and more sonorous voice than the Italian method; and, indeed, the reason why powerful dramatic voices are so rare among Italians, is because of their one-sided preference, in their exercises, for the easiest vowels.

When Mendelssohn travelled in Italy he noted that there were very few good singers at the opera-houses,

and that one had to go to London and Paris to find them. To-day few of them can be found even in London and Paris; and, indeed, I could easily show, by giving lists of the famous singers of the past and present, that the Italians constitute a small minority as compared with the German, French, and Scandinavian singers of the first rank. The custom so long followed by singers of all nationalities of adopting Italian stage names has confused the public on the subject. And, finally, I could name a dozen German singers who have won first-class honors in Italian opera; but where is there an Italian *Tannhäuser* or *Brünnhilde* or *Wotan?* All honor, therefore, to the versatility of German singers, who, like Lilli Lehmann, for instance, can sing *Norma* and *Isolde* equally well.

And still more honor to the German composers who have restored the true function of song. Everybody knows that in the popular songs, or folk songs, of *all* nations, including the Italian, the words are quite as important as the melody. It was only in the artificial songs of the Netherland school and the Italian opera composers that the voice was degraded to the function of a mere inarticulate instrument; and it remained for Wagner, following the precedence of Gluck, to restore it to its rank as the inseparable companion of poetry. And what led him to do this was not abstract reflection but artistic

instinct and experience. He does not even claim the honor of having originated the true vocal style, but confesses with pride that it was a *woman*, Frau Schroeder-Devrient, who first revealed to him the highest possibilities of dramatic singing, and he boasts that he was the only one that learned this lesson of the great German singer, and developed the hints regarding the correct vocal style unconsciously given by her.

It must not be forgotten, however, that side by side with the music-drama and partly preceding it, another form of vocal music grew up in Germany, which in a very similar manner restored the voice to its true sphere as the wedded wife of poetry. I refer, of course, to the *Lied*, or parlor song, to which, indeed, I might have devoted this whole essay, quite as well as to the music-drama, if there were anything in Italian music that might have been compared to the songs of Schubert, Schumann, Franz, Brahms, Liszt, Rubinstein, etc.

As Sir George Grove poetically puts it, in Schubert's songs "the music changes with the words as a landscape does when the sun and clouds pass over it. And in this Schubert has anticipated Wagner, since the words in which he writes are as much the absolute basis of his songs as Wagner's librettos are of his operas." Liszt, too, notes somewhere that Schubert doubtless exerted an indirect influence on

the development of the opera by means of the dramatic realism which characterizes the melody and accompaniment of his parlor songs (such as the "Erl King," the "Doppelgänger," etc.)—a realism which becomes still more pronounced in Schumann, Franz, and Liszt, in whose songs every word of the poem colors its bar of music with its special emotional tint, instead of merely serving, as in the old *bel canto*, as an artificial and meaningless scaffolding for the construction and execution of a melody.

This parallel evolution of the parlor song and the music-drama cannot be too strongly emphasized: for the same tendency being followed by so many of the greatest geniuses (some of whom are not Germans) affords cumulative evidence of the fact that the German style (which, as I have explained, includes all that is valuable in the Italian method) is the true vocal style, the style of the future, the style which cosmopolitan American art will have to adopt. I have been told that since the revival of German opera in New York, the Italian teachers in the city have lost many of their pupils. Obviously, if they wish to regain them they will have to adopt the best features of the German method, just as the Germans have adopted all that is good in the Italian method. It cannot be denied that the pupils turned out by the average vocal teachers are quite unable to sing a Franz or even a Schubert song

correctly and with proper emotional expression. Now, it is evident, as Ehlert says, that "that art of singing which abides with the *bel canto* and is unable to sing Bach, Beethoven, and Schumann, has not attained to the height of their period. It becomes its task to adapt itself to these new circumstances, to renounce the comfortable solfeggios and acquire the poetic expression that they accept."

The famous tenor Vogl, a contemporary of Schubert, wrote in his diary the following significant words: "Nothing shows so plainly the want of a good school of singing as Schubert's songs. Otherwise, what an enormous and universal effect must have been produced throughout the world, wherever the German language is understood, by these truly divine inspirations, these utterances of a musical clairvoyance! How many would have comprehended, probably for the first time, the meaning of such expressions as 'Speech and Poetry in Music,' 'Words in Harmony,' 'ideas clothed in music,' etc., and would have learned that the finest poems of our greatest poets may be enhanced and even transcended when translated into musical language." It is humiliating to be obliged to confess that good schools of singing, the absence of which Vogl deplored, are still lamentably rare, although he himself, by his example, did much to develop the correct method. We have just seen how Wagner obtained

valuable hints from Schroeder-Devrient. Similarly, we find that Schubert learned from his friend Vogl, who alone at first could sing his songs properly, and by showing that they *could* be sung encouraged Schubert in developing his original style.

It seems to me that these facts ought to be extremely gratifying and encouraging to students of vocal music, because they refute the notion that vocalists can only be interpretative and not creative, and their fame and influence, therefore, merely ephemeral. On the contrary, they can, like Vogl and Schroeder-Devrient, even aspire to guide composers and help to mark out new paths in art: which surely, ought to be more gratifying to their pride than the cheap applause which the sopranists and prima donnas of the *bel canto* period used to receive for the meaningless colorature arias which they compelled the enslaved composers to write, or manufactured for themselves. And there is another way in which singers of the new style can become creative. Chopin speaks in one of his letters of a violoncellist who played a certain poor piece so remarkably well that it actually appeared to be good music. Similarly, a good vocalist (like Fräulein Brandt, for instance, who is very clever in this respect) can put so much art and feeling into the weaker parts and episodes of songs and operas as to make them entertaining where they are naturally tiresome. When

we bear in mind these high possibilities of singing, we must admit that there is no nobler profession than that of a conscientious vocalist—a profession without which some of the deepest feelings that stir the human soul would remain unknown to the world.

VI

GERMAN OPERA IN NEW YORK

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Perhaps it is not generally known that Mr. Theodore Thomas some years ago entertained the project of reviving German opera in New York, in a manner that should eclipse all previous operatic enterprises in this country. It was his intention to give in the leading American cities a series of performances of Wagner's Nibelung Tetralogy, and he looked forward to this as the crowning achievement of his busy life. For years he never gave a concert without having at least one Wagner selection on the programme, no matter how much some of the critics and patrons protested. In 1884 he considered the public sufficiently weaned of Italian sweets to stand a strong dose of Wagner; so he imported the three leading singers of the Bayreuth festivals —Materna, Winkelmann, and Scaria—for a number of festival concerts. The extraordinary success of these concerts seemed to indicate that the time was ripe for a complete theatrical production of Wagner's later music-dramas, and Mr. Thomas was already elaborating his plans when an accident frus-

trated them and took the whole matter out of his hands.

This accident was the signal failure of Italian opera at the Metropolitan Opera House during the first season of its existence. As Mr. Abbey lost over a quarter of a million dollars by this disaster, no other manager could be found willing to take his place and risk another fortune. Since Mr. Abbey's company included several of the most popular artists—Nilsson, Sembrich, Scalchi, Campanini, Del Puente, etc., and his repertory embraced the usual popular operas, the conclusion seemed inevitable that the public wanted a complete change. Dr. Damrosch was accordingly appealed to at the eleventh hour, and he hastened to Germany and brought over a company that scored an immediate success, surprising even to those who had long advocated the establishment of a German opera in New York. And this success became still more pronounced in the following seasons, when a better company was secured, with Herr Seidl as conductor.

Perhaps it is fortunate that Mr. Thomas's project was never realized. Had he succeeded, New York and several other cities would no doubt have enjoyed a series of interesting Wagner performances for one or two seasons ; but after the first curiosity had been satisfied, it is very likely that the enterprise would have come to an end for lack of funds.

For it is a well-established fact that grand opera, if given with the best singers, artistic scenery, and an orchestra of sixty to one hundred men, cannot be made self-supporting, however generously the public may contribute to it. The Paris opera is kept afloat by means of an annual subsidy of eight hundred thousand francs, and the imperial opera-houses of Berlin and Vienna, although similarly endowed, are burdened with large annual deficits which have to be covered by additional contributions from the imperial exchequers. New York can hardly claim so large a public interested in high-class opera as Vienna and Berlin; hence it would be unreasonable to expect that grand opera should fare better here. It was, therefore, one of the most lucky accidents in the history of American music that the Metropolitan Opera House was built, in opposition to the Academy of Music, by a number of the richest people in New York, who had made up their minds to spare no cost to make it successful and to annihilate the rival house. Having once built the new opera-house, it became necessary to continue giving in it the only kind of opera adapted to the vast dimensions of its auditorium, unless the stockholders should become willing to pay the high annual rent without any return at all. And thus German opera has been established in New York, if not for all time, at least for years to come.

The fact cannot be too much emphasized that, properly speaking, there is *no deficit* at the Metropolitan Opera House. True, the total expenses of the operatic season of 1886–1887 were about four hundred and forty-two thousand dollars, and the receipts only two hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars, thus necessitating an assessment of two thousand five hundred dollars on each stockholder. But it must be borne in mind that this assessment simply represents the sum that the stockholders paid for their boxes. As there were forty-five subscription nights, and as each box holds six seats, the price of each was nine dollars, which can hardly be deemed too much for the best seats in the house, considering that outsiders have to pay ten dollars for these same seats, or sixty dollars for a box. A large part of the assessment (about one thousand dollars for each stockholder) would remain for covering the general expenses of the building (including the mortgage bonds), even if no opera were given at all; and surely the box-holders would be foolish if they refused to pay the extra sum (four dollars and eighty-eight cents for each seat), which insures them forty-five evenings of social and musical entertainment. To persons of their wealth this extra sum is, after all, a mere trifle; and it enables them to bask in the proud consciousness of taking the place, in this country, of royalty abroad in supporting a

form of art that has always been considered pre-eminently aristocratic.

Some of the stockholders make no secret of the fact that they would very much prefer Italian to German opera, which is Sanskrit to them; and every year, at the directors' meetings, the question of reviving Italian opera is warmly debated. There is also a considerable number of amateurs, editors, and correspondents who are eagerly waiting for some signs showing that German opera is losing ground, so that they may raise a war-whoop in behalf of Italian opera. But the powers that rule the destinies of the Metropolitan Opera House are too wise to heed the arguments of these prophets. They know that Italian opera can never again be successfully revived in New York, and that the only alternative for the present lies between German opera and no opera at all. Signor Angelo and Mr. Mapleson were as unsuccessful in their last efforts in behalf of Italian opera as Mr. Abbey. And although Mme. Patti fared better at her last appearance, it was only because a large number of people believed that she *really* was singing in New York for the last time; for when she returned a fortnight later for *another* "farewell," the sale of seats was so small that the spoiled prima donna refused to sing, and only one performance was given instead of two.

The lovers of vocal tight-rope dancing and thread-

bare orchestral accompaniments who insist that Wagner is merely a fashion, and that ere long there will be a return to the saccharine melodies of Rossini and Bellini, show thereby that they have never studied the history of the opera. This history teaches a curious lesson, viz., that operas which had a great vogue at one time and subsequently lost their popularity can *never* be galvanized into real life again. What has become of the threescore and more operas of Donizetti, and the forty of Rossini—some of which for years monopolized the stage so completely the world over that Weber and Beethoven were ignored even in Vienna and the German capitals? They are dead, and all efforts to revive them have been futile. These operas had sprung into *sudden* popularity, whereas "Fidelio," "Euryanthe," "Lohengrin," and "Tannhäuser," which for years had to fight for every inch of ground, are now masters of the situation, and gaining in popularity every year. And this brings us to the second lesson taught by the history of the opera—that the works that thus had to *fight* their way into the hearts of the public are the immortal operas that are sure to gain more and more favor as years go by. Moreover, the statistics of German opera-houses show that Wagner's operas, from the "Flying Dutchman" to the "Nibelung's Ring," have been gaining in popularity and frequency of repetition, year by year, with a

constancy that might almost be expressed with mathematical exactness by means of a *crescendo*: <. And we are by no means at the biggest end of the *crescendo* yet. For there are scores of cities where Wagner would be even more popular than he is, were it not for the woful rarity of competent dramatic singers and conductors.

There is, therefore, no hope for the *Italianissimi*, who sigh for their maccaroni arias and their "Ernani" and "Gazza Ladra" soup. Italian opera has ceased to exist in New York, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg, and even in Italy dramatic music of the modern school is gradually driving out the old-fashioned lyric and florid opera.

In New York, moreover, the press is almost unanimous in favor of German opera, and the press, as a rule, is omnipotent in theatrical matters. I am convinced, for instance, that one of the principal reasons why Wagner was more rapidly acclimated in New York than in the German capitals is that most of the leading German critics are old men—too old to submit readily to Wagner's revolutionary tendencies; whereas in New York all the critics are young men, who only needed to hear a few good performances of Wagner's operas to be filled with an enthusiasm for them, with which many of their readers could not help being infected.

Still another important point must be borne in

mind: the fact that the vastness of the Metropolitan auditorium makes it impossible to hear the weak voices and the thin scores of Italians to advantage. *Ergo*, if this house remains the centre of music in New York, there can be no question that, as I have just stated, the prospect for the next decade or two is, either German Opera or No Opera.

A series of interviews published in the newspapers indicate that the indifference of the stockholders to German music has been greatly exaggerated; and the vote that was taken on January 27, 1888, stood forty to nine in favor of continuing German opera, with an assessment of three thousand two hundred dollars on each box. Not a few of the stockholders would, indeed, prefer "Siegfried" to "Ernani," even if "Ernani" could be depended on for as large audiences as Wagner's opera, which is far from being the case; and I have myself heard some of them confess that after repeatedly hearing Wagner's later operas, they discovered in them a constant stream of melody where all had seemed to them at first a mere chaos of sound. Some of the stockholders, on the other hand, are so absolutely unmusical that they do not know the meaning of the words "tenor" and "soprano," and if blindfolded could not tell if "Faust" or "Aïda" was being sung. (This is a real fact that I might prove by an amusing anecdote, were it not too personal.) To

this class of stockholders what difference can it make whether they have German or Italian opera? They merely go to the opera because it is a very fashionable thing to do so, and because the ownership of an opera-box confers on them a social distinction almost equal to an order, or a title of nobility, in foreign countries.

Many of the stockholders have converted the anterooms to their boxes into luxurious parlors, into which they can retire and talk if the music bores them. But, unfortunately, there are some black sheep among them and their invited guests who do not make use of this privilege, but give the rest of the audience the benefit of their conversational accomplishments. The parquet often resents these interruptions, and hisses lustily until quiet is restored. There are not a few lovers of music who, although able to pay for parquet seats, frequent the upper galleries for fear of being annoyed by the conversation in the boxes. In the highest gallery the quiet of a tomb reigns supreme, and woe to any one who comes late, or whispers, or turns the leaves of his score too noisily: he is immediately pierced with a volley of indignant hisses.

It must be admitted, however, that there is much less talking in the opera-house at present than there was a few years ago. This difference is especially noticeable on Wagner nights, and the change is

simply one of the numerous operatic reforms introduced by Wagner and his followers. It must be borne in mind that in Italian opera conversation frequently is not at all out of place, but is a factor of the entertainment *recognized even by the composer!* Wagner brings out this point clearly in the following remarks: "In Italian opera," he says, "the public gives its attention only to the most brilliant numbers sung by the popular prima donna or her vocal rival; the rest of the opera it ignores almost entirely, and devotes the evening to mutual visits in the boxes and loud conversation. This attitude of the public led the composers of yore to confine their efforts at artistic creation to the solo numbers referred to, and to fill up deliberately all intermediate portions, the choruses and minor parts, with commonplace and empty phrases that had no other purpose than that of serving as noise to sustain the conversation of the audience."

That this is not an exaggerated statement is shown by an extract from a private letter written by Liszt at Milan. Speaking of the famous Scala Opera House, he says: "In this blessed land putting a serious opera on the stage is not at all a serious thing. A fortnight is generally time enough. The musicians of the orchestra, and the singers, who are generally strangers to each other and get no encouragement from the audience (the latter are

generally either chatting or sleeping—in the fifth box they either sup or play cards), assemble inattentive, insensible, and troubled with catarrh, not as artists, but as people who are paid for the music they make. There is nothing more icy than these Italian representations. No trace of *nuances*, in spite of the exaggeration of accent and gesture dictated by Italian taste, much less any effect *d'ensemble*. Each artist thinks only of himself, without troubling his thoughts about his neighbor. Why worry one's self for a public that does not even listen?"

In German opera, on the other hand, the orchestral part and the choruses and declamatory sections are just as important as the lyric numbers, and many of the most exquisite passages in the operas of Weber and Wagner are a kind of superior pantomime music during which no voice at all is heard on the stage. Now I am convinced that much of the talking in opera-boxes is simply due to ignorance of this fact. Vocal music is much more readily appreciated than instrumental music, and those who have no ear for orchestral measures do not realize that others are enraptured by them. Hence they talk as soon as the singing ceases, unconscious of the fact that they are greatly annoying those who wish to listen to the orchestra.

To a large extent the stupid custom of having

music between the acts at theatres is responsible for the talking at the opera. For between the acts everybody, of course, wants to talk; and since at the theatre the orchestra merely furnishes a sort of background or support for the conversation, people naturally come to look upon the overtures and interludes and introductions to the second and third acts of an opera in similar light. Even if *entr'acte* music in theatres were much better than it is commonly, this consideration alone ought to suffice to banish it from the theatres. It degrades the art and spoils the public.

Those of the stockholders of the Metropolitan Opera House who indulge in loud conversation while the music goes on, or who rent their boxes to irresponsible parties, should remember that it is their *pecuniary* interest to preserve quiet. For not a few amateurs, as already stated, are driven to the cheaper parts of the house, or discouraged from going at all, by the annoying conversation; and the losses thus resulting are of course added to their annual assessments.

Again, it ought to be clear to any one who has the most elementary knowledge of the laws of etiquette that to disturb others needlessly in the enjoyment of a dearly purchased pleasure is evidence of very bad manners. Musical people suffer more from such interruptions than persons whose ears are not simi-

larly refined can imagine; for the tone colors of a Wagnerian score are as exquisitely delicate and refined as the evanescent films and colors of a soap-bubble, so that the mere rustling of a fan or a programme mars them.

Everybody has heard the story of Handel, who used to get very angry if any one talked in the room, even when he was only giving lessons to the Prince and Princess of Wales. At such times, as Burney relates, the Princess of Wales, with her accustomed mildness and benignity, used to say: "Hush! hush! Handel is in a passion." And Liszt never gave a finer exhibition of his wit and artistic courage than when, at an imperial soirée in the Russian capital, he suddenly ceased playing in the midst of a piece, because the Czar was talking loudly with an officer. The Czar sent an attendant to inquire of Liszt why he stopped; whereupon Liszt retorted that it was the first rule of court etiquette that when the Czar was speaking others must be silent. The Czar never forgave him this well-merited rebuke.

This anecdote has a moral for those who talk loudly at the opera; for it calls attention to the fact that they not only annoy those of the audience who wish to hear the music, but also insult the artists on the stage.

The establishment of habitual silence during

operatic performances is only one of the beneficial changes introduced into operatic etiquette through German opera. The method of applauding has been revolutionized too. It is no longer customary to interrupt the flow of the orchestral music by applauding a singer. All the applause is now reserved for the end of the acts. I remember a performance of "Lohengrin," at the Academy of Music, at which the music was thrice interrupted by some ill-bred admirers of Campanini, who applauded him when he first appeared in sight on the swan-boat; again, when he stepped on shore, and a third time when he came to the front of the stage. Now here was one of the most poetic scenes on the whole operatic stage utterly marred for all refined listeners, merely for the sake of showing admiration for a singer which might as well have been expressed later on when the curtain was down. Campanini recognized all these interruptions, and bowed his thanks to the audience.

Quite different was Herr Niemann's behavior when he made his *début* at the Metropolitan Opera House. Here was the greatest living dramatic tenor, an artist identified with the cause and the triumphs of Wagner, appearing on a new continent, in the same rôle that he had created at the historic Bayreuth festival of 1876. The house, of course, was packed, and included many old admirers who

had heard him abroad, and who, of course, received him with a volley of applause when he staggered into *Hunding's* hut. But Niemann did not acknowledge this applause with a bow or even a smile. He appeared before the public as *Siegmund*, and not as Herr Niemann. But when the curtain was down he promptly responded to the enthusiastic recalls, and was quite willing, and more than willing, to come forward as often as the audience desired and acknowledge their kindness with bowed thanks.

Now, it is to be noted in this case that Herr Niemann did not lose anything by refusing to recognize the applause that greeted him when he first appeared on the stage ; on the contrary, it raised him in the estimation of all whose esteem was worth having ; and these applauded him all the more vigorously for his self-denial when the curtain was down. Singers of the old school should take this lesson to heart and ponder it. They imagine success is measured by the number of times they are applauded, and consequently introduce loud, high notes and other claptrap at the end of every solo, if possible. They forget that while they thus secure the applause of the uncultured, real connoisseurs are disgusted, and put them down in their mental note-books as second-rate artists or charlatans.

Those artists who have followed Wagner's precepts, and merged their individuality and personal

vanity in their rôles, have never had occasion to regret their apparent self-sacrifice. They are the only kind of singers now eagerly sought for by managers; and an educated public that does not tolerate applause while the orchestra plays, never fails to vent its pent-up enthusiasm at the end of the act, as has been abundantly proved at the Metropolitan Opera House. A curious episode may be noted sometimes. As soon as the singing has ceased and the curtain begins to descend, a number of people begin to applaud. But the full-blooded Wagnerites wait until the last chord of the orchestra has died away before they join in. The volume of applause is then suddenly multiplied three or four times, to the bewilderment of novices, who do not understand what it all means. It simply means that the concluding strains of Wagner's acts, are usually among the most beautiful measures in the whole opera, which it is a pity and a shame to mar by premature applause.

I have often wondered why people, who put on their overcoats during the final measures, are not ashamed thus to advertise their utter lack of artistic sensibility and indifference to other people's feelings. Nor can one wonder, in view of such facts, that the late King of Bavaria preferred to have opera given when no other spectator was in the house, or that the present Emperor of Germany is beginning to follow his example.

Wagner does not merely ask his interpreters to scorn the usual methods of securing cheap applause, but he himself avoids them in his compositions with a heroic conscientiousness. There is a story of a well-known English conductor who objected to produce a piece by a noted German composer because it ended *pianissimo*. He was afraid that it would not be applauded if it did not end loudly. Now the finales of Italian operas are habitually constructed on this method. The chorus is brought in at the end, whether the situation calls for it or not, and made to sing as loudly as possible. This stirs up the audience to equally loud applause, and all ends well.

How differently Wagner goes to work! In "Siegfried," for instance, there is no chorus at all. The first act ends with *Siegfried's* cleaving of the anvil with the sword which he has just forged before the eyes of the audience; and the third ends with the love duo. In these cases there are only two persons on the stage; and at the end of the second act *Siegfried* is *entirely alone*, and the curtain falls as he mutely follows the bird to the fire-girdled rock on which *Brünnhilde* lies asleep, amid the intoxicating and promising strains of the orchestra. The ending of "Die Walküre" is equally quiet and poetic. *Wotan* has placed poor *Brünnhilde* on a mound of moss, for disobeying his orders, and covered her with her helmet, after plunging her into a magnetic sleep

which is to last until a hero shall come to wake her. He strikes the rock with his spear, whereupon a flame breaks out that quickly becomes a sea of fire encircling the rock. Then he disappears in the fire toward the background, and for several minutes there is no one on the stage but the sleeping Valkyrie, and nothing to be heard but the crackling and roaring of the flames, re-echoed in the orchestra ; and this is the end of the opera.

One more illustration : The greater part of the second act of " Die Meistersinger " is taken up with *Beckmesser's* serenade, comically interrupted by the songs and the hammering of *Hans Sachs* the cobbler. Toward the end the apprentice *David* sees *Beckmesser*, and imagining he is serenading *his* sweetheart, assaults and beats him most unmercifully. The noise attracts the neighbors, who all take part in the affray, and the scene culminates in a perfect pandemonium of noise. Now there is hardly an operatic composer who would not have closed the act with this exciting and tumultuous chorus. Not so Wagner. The sound of the watchman's horn suddenly clears the street, and no one is left but the watchman himself, who timorously toddles up the street with his lantern, while the moon rises above the roofs of the houses, and the muted strings of the orchestra softly and dreamily recall a few of the motives of the preceding scenes. I was sitting

next to Professor Paine, of Harvard, at a performance of this opera at the Metropolitan, one evening. He had not seen it before, and I shall never forget the expression of surprise on his face when he saw the curtain descending on this dreamy moonlight scene, with *a deserted stage.* He considered it a bold deviation from established operatic customs, and yet he could not for a moment deny that it was infinitely more poetic than the traditional final chorus, with its meaningless noise and pomp.

Not that Wagner despised the chorus, as is sometimes said. He showed in the third act of this same opera, in the scene of the folk-festival, that when a chorus is called for by the situation no one can supply a more inspired and inspiring volume of concerted sound than he. With the possible exception of the last number in Bach's Passion music, I regard the choral music of this act as the most sublime ever written. Here, at any rate, the *vox populi* is divine.

The magnificent quintet in this act of "Die Meistersinger" also affords proof that if Wagner banished concerted music from his later works, it was not because he lacked inspiration for that kind of work. Although extremely Wagnerian in its harmonies, it is one of those numbers which even Wagner's enemies admire. Some years ago I witnessed a curious scene in the Berlin Opera House.

According to Wagner's directions, the curtain goes down after this quintet, but the music continues until the scene is changed. Now, on the occasion in question, the quintet evoked so much enthusiasm that a storm of applause arose. The extreme Wagnerites resented this interruption of the music, and began to hiss; whereupon the others redoubled their applause and their calls for an "encore," which finally had to be granted, as the only way of appeasing this paradoxical disturbance in which Wagnerites hissed while the others applauded!

At the Metropolitan Opera House the stage arrangements are so clumsy that it is necessary to have an intermission of over a quarter of an hour, in order to change this scene. Consequently the last and most popular part of this master-work is never seen till after midnight; and many leave the house annoyed by the long intermission.

And this brings us to the weakest part of modern opera. It lasts too long. Wagner is not the only guilty composer. Gounod's "Faust," Weber's "Euryanthe," and most of Meyerbeer's operas, if given without cuts, would last over four hours. But in these cases no irreparable harm is done by a few cuts, whereas in Wagner's operas there are very few bars that can be spared, both on account of their intrinsic beauty and because they are required to keep up the dramatic continuity of the story. Neverthe-

less, Wagner's operas must be cut, in some cases most unmercifully, as in "Die Götterdämmerung," in which Herr Seidl was obliged to omit the whole of the first prelude—the weirdly grand scene of the three Fates, and the scene between the two Valkyries —merely to prevent the opera from lasting till one o'clock.

Herr Seidl is perhaps the greatest living interpreter of Wagner. He brings to his works the enthusiasm without which they can neither be interpreted nor fully understood; and his enthusiasm proves contagious to the orchestra and the singers. He not only rehearses every bar of the orchestral score with minute care, but each of the vocalists has to come to his room and go through his or her part until he is satisfied. Although he is invariably civil, his men obey him as they would the sternest general, and admiration of his superior knowledge makes them more attentive to their duty than fear ever would. I do not believe German opera would have won its present popularity under any other conductor excepting Hans Richter. One of the traits to which he owes his great success as a Wagner conductor is his instinctive perception of what parts can be omitted with the minimum of injury to the work he is interpreting. Except at Bayreuth, Wagner's later works did not especially prosper at first, because they were either too long or injudiciously cut.

Herr Seidl, however, succeeded with them everywhere. One time Wagner wrote to him complaining that he made so many cuts in his operas. But Herr Seidl wrote back, giving his reasons, and explaining the situation; whereupon he received the laconic telegram from Wagner, "*Schiessen Sie los!*" (Fire away!).

Eduard von Hartmann, in his recent work, "Die Philosophie des Schönen," has some just remarks on Wagner's mistake in making his operas so long that conductors are *obliged* to use the red pencil, which is not always done intelligently; whereas if he himself had undertaken the task of condensing his works their organic unity might have been preserved. True, Wagner did not intend his later works to be incorporated in the regular operatic repertory, but desired them to be sung only on certain festal occasions, as at Bayreuth, where people went with the sole object of hearing music, and with no other business oppressing them for the moment. But at a time when the struggle for existence is so severe as now it was chimerical on Wagner's part to hope that such a plan could be permanently realized. Few musical people can afford to journey to Bayreuth merely to gratify their taste for opera. Hence the Bayreuth festivals, although most delightful from an artistic point of view, would have never been financially successful, had not the vocalists given their

services *gratis;* and it is doubtful if they will be continued after the death of Wagner's widow. Moreover, it would have been a musical calamity to have the treasures of melody and harmony that are stored away in the Nibelung scores reserved for the lucky few who are able to go to Bayreuth. Wagner himself must have felt this when, contrary to his original intention, he gave Neumann permission to perform the Tetralogy (under Seidl's direction) in Germany, Italy, and Belgium; and since that time it has been successfully incorporated into the repertory of all the leading German cities, and many smaller ones, such as Weimar, Mannheim, and Carlsruhe.

In Germany the length of Wagner's and Meyerbeer's operas is not so objectionable as here, because there the opera commences at seven, or even at six thirty, and six, if it is a very long one; hence it is all over shortly after ten, and everybody has time to take supper before going to bed. But in New York, where it is not customary to sup, and where the dinner hour is between six and seven, it would hardly be advisable to commence the opera before eight. Nor is the interest in the opera sufficiently general to inspire the hope that for its sake any change will be made in the hour of dining. The danger rather lies the other way: that the custom of delaying dinner till eight, which is coming into vogue among the English (who care neither for

music nor the theatre), will be followed in this city.

Now consider the inevitable consequences of having excessively long operas. America has plenty of poor loafers, but few wealthy *rentiers* who spend their days in bed or in idleness, and are therefore insatiable in their appetite for entertainment in the evening. The typical American works hard all day long, whether he is rich or poor, and in the evening his brain is too tired to follow for four hours the complicated orchestral score of a music-drama. If he listens attentively, he will be exhausted by eleven o'clock, and the last act, which he might have enjoyed hugely if not so "played out," will weary him so much that he will probably resolve to avoid the opera in the future. Thus opera suffers in the same way that society suffers: the late hour at which all entertainments begin prevents the "desirable" men who have worked all day, and must be at their work bright and early the next day, from attending parties, balls, and operas.

It must be said, on the other hand, in defence of long German operas, that it is only while they are novelties to the hearer that they fatigue his brain beyond endurance. After they have been heard a few times they cease to be a study that calls for a laborious concentration of the attention, and become a source of pure delight and recreation. The diffi-

culty lies in convincing people of this fact. There are in New York hundreds of persons, who, having read of the rare beauties of "Tristan" or "Siegfried," went to the opera to hear and judge for themselves. Of course, as everything was new to them, they found it hard work to follow all the intricacies of the plot and the music at the same time; hence, their verdict next day was that German opera was "too heavy" for them. These persons cannot be made to believe that if they would only repeat their visits, the labor of listening would be reduced to a minimum and the pleasure increased to enthusiasm. I know a man, one of the cleverest writers for the New York press, a man who can afford to go to the opera every evening, and who *does* go when Meyerbeer's operas are given, but who absolutely and stubbornly refuses to attend a Wagner performance at the Metropolitan. Why? Because a number of years ago he attended a wretched performance in Italian of "Lohengrin" which bored him! I believe there are many like him in New York.

Mr. Carl Rosa, in an article which appeared in *Murray's Magazine* a year ago, remarks on this topic: "An Englishman, once bored [at the opera] will with difficulty be made to return; and this is the reason why light opera, opera bouffe, and burlesque have their advantage in this country. They are so easy to digest after dinner." And again: "There is no

doubt that opera is, to some extent, an acquired taste; but the taste, once imparted, grows rapidly. From personal experience I know that *some of my best supporters had to be dragged to the opera at first*, and induced to sit it through."

In these remarks lies a valuable hint to the lovers of German opera. The most important thing to do, if opera is to be permanently retained, is to *enlarge the operatic public.* This can only be done by means of a concerted action of all admirers of the opera. Let them keep on, with "damnable iteration," to drum into their friends' heads the fact that if they will only make up their minds to attend one good opera *three or four times in succession* they will become devoted admirers of it the rest of their lives. The friends will finally consent, in pure self-defence, to try the experiment; and in three cases out of four they will become converted and admit that German operatic music is indeed a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

There is at present in New York a considerable number of musical Mugwumps, persons who formerly doted on Italian opera, but who now find it tiresome after hearing German opera. The distinguished English psychologist, Mr. James Sully, incidentally speaks of his experiences in regard to Wagner's operas, in his work on "Sensation and Intuition." "Although," he says, "I went to the first perform-

ance decidedly prejudiced against the noisy *Zukunftsmusik*, I found that after patient study of these operas I became so susceptible of their high dramatic beauties that I lost much of my relish for the older Italian opera, which began to appear highly unnatural. I heard from other cultivated Germans—among others from Professor Helmholtz—that they had undergone quite a similar change of opinion with respect to these operas."

Who, on the other hand, has ever heard of a renegade Wagnerite? Such an animal does not exist, and if a specimen could be found, it would pay to exhibit him in a dime museum. The very expression seems a contradiction in terms. Wagner frequently asserted that no one could *understand* his music unless he admired it; and there is truth in this, for only enthusiasm can sharpen the mental faculties sufficiently to enable us to perceive the countless subtle beauties in Wagner's and Weber's scores. M. Saint-Saëns, who is considered the best living score-reader, compares Wagner's scores to those masterworks of mediæval architecture which are adorned with sculptured reliefs that must have required infinite care and labor in the chiselling. Now, just as a careless observer of such architectural works hardly notices the lovely figures sculptured on them, so the average opera-goer does not hear the exquisite harmonic and melodic miniature-work in

Wagner's music-dramas. But if he has once taken the trouble to study them, he becomes an enthusiast for life ; for he constantly discovers new and beautiful details which had previously escaped his notice.

The eighth performance of "Siegfried" in New York was one of those events that will always live in the memory of those who were so fortunate as to be present. Everyone on the stage and in the orchestra seemed to be inspired, and the audience in consequence was electrified. For my part, although I had heard this music-drama at least a dozen times previously, and knew every bar by heart, it seemed as if I had never heard it before, so vividly were all its beauties revealed in the white heat of Conductor Seidl's enthusiasm. All the evening I sat trembling with excitement, and could not sleep for hours afterward. I have for twelve years made a special study of the emotions, but I could not conceive any pleasure more intense and more prolonged than that of listening to such a music-drama. Is not such a pleasure worth cultivating, even if it involves some toil at first? And have not musical people reason to regard with profound pity those poor mortals who can enjoy beauty only through the medium of their eyes, their ears being deaf to the charms of artistically combined sounds?

At the "Siegfried" performance just referred to

the audience fortunately was large ; but there have been other performances, equally good, when the audience was meagre. On such occasions much of my enjoyment was marred by the melancholy thought that such glorious music should be wasted on empty stalls, when there were thousands of persons in the city who, if they only could have been induced to overcome their prejudices and devote a few hours of previous study to the libretto and the pianoforte-score of these operas, would not only have found them entertaining, but would have enjoyed them rapturously.

The essence and perennial charm of German music lies in its *melodious harmony.* Nothing is more absurd than the notion that there is more melody in Italian than in German music. The only difference is that in Italian music the melody is more prominent, being unencumbered by complicated harmonies and accompaniments, while in German music the melody is interwoven with the various harmonic parts, which makes it difficult to follow at first. But when once this gift has been acquired, it is a source of eternal pleasure. Nor is it so difficult to cultivate the harmonic sense, if one takes pains to hear good music often and *attentively.* I once met a young lady on a transatlantic steamer, who frankly confessed she could not see any beauty in certain exquisite Wagnerian and Chopinesque modulations

and harmonies which I played for her on the piano. When asked if she did not care for harmony at all, she replied: "Oh, yes! I know a chord which is *simply divine!*" Then she played—what do you fancy?—the *simple major triad*—A flat in the bass, and A flat, C, E flat an octave higher—which is the most elementary of all chords, the very alphabet of music. If she found this commonplace chord "simply divine," what would she have said could she have been made to realize that the modulations I had played were as superior to her chord in poetic charm as a line of Shakspere is to the letters A B C? And she *could* have been made to realize this truth in a few months, under proper instruction.

I have dwelt so long on this matter because I have come to the conclusion, as already stated, that the greatest problem in connection with German opera is to enlarge the patronage, and induce persons to reserve their judgment of a "heavy" opera until they have heard it two or three times. They will soon find that the word "heavy" is a very relative and changeable term in music. To one who really admires Shakspere and Homer, a fashionable novel is tedious beyond endurance; just so, to one who can appreciate "Tristan" or "Euryanthe," Verdi's "Ernani" and Bellini's "Norma" are heavy as lead, soporific as opium.

The difficulty of understanding subtle harmonies

is perhaps the main reason why English-speaking people are so slow in appreciating and encouraging the opera. But there are two other important reasons which may be briefly referred to—religious rigorousness, and a certain predilection for the ornamental style of singing.

No doubt there was a time when the stage was so profligate that the Puritans were justified in tabooing it altogether. But that is not now the case. There are many theatres where plays are given that are not only pure in tone, but exert a refining and educating influence on all who hear them. And as for operas, there is hardly one in the modern repertory that is open to censure on moral grounds. Mr. Carl Rosa refers to the curious fact that, when circumstances compel him to give an operatic performance in a hall instead of a theatre, the audiences are of quite a distinct character, including many who like opera, but do not wish to go to a theatre. Now, this general condemnation of the theatre because it is often used for frivolous purposes is just as unreasonable as it would be to condemn and avoid all novels because Zola writes novels.

There is, indeed, a positive harm that results from the tabooing of the theatre by religious people. Why is so large a proportion of our plays frivolous and vulgar? Because the frivolous and vulgar predominate among theatre-goers. If the large number

of refined people who avoid the theatre were to attend, this proportion might be reversed, and more of the managers would find it profitable to bring out clean and wholesome dramas. Some prominent clergymen have lately expressed themselves in this sense, and it is probable that a reaction is at hand that will benefit the cause of serious opera. There is absolutely nothing in any of the operas given at the Metropolitan that could not be fitly sung before a Sunday-school audience. Why, then, taboo the opera and jeopardize its existence, leaving the field to the frivolous operettas and farces?

The other obstacle alluded to—the love of coloratura song—is a thing that will cure itself with the advance of musical culture. The Germans and the French have long since turned their backs on the florid variety of vocalists, and the Italians are now following suit. An eminent Italian teacher in New York, who has made a specialty of teaching trills and runs and roulades and other vocal circus tricks, lately declared that he was tired of this style of singing, and began to prefer a more simple and dramatic style. The same is true of the modern Italian composers. It is well known that Boïto, Ponchielli, and Verdi in his latest operas, approximate the German style; and their admirers will doubtless ere long adapt their taste to this change. Nevertheless, there are not a few remaining who look upon opera as a

sort of vocal acrobatics. They go once or twice to the Metropolitan, and feel defrauded of their money if the prima donna fails to come forward to the prompter's box to run up some breakneck scales, and, having arrived at the top, descend by means of a chain of trills or series of somersaults. Their interest in music is *athletic* (feats of skill), not *æsthetic* (artistic expression of emotions). Yet these people have the impudence to say that German opera is "stupid," forgetting that their case might be analogous to that of the drunkard who thinks the earth is reeling when he is.

This class of opera-goers never tire of abusing such singers as Fräulein Brandt and Herr Niemann because their voices are no longer as mellow as in their youth, and sometimes weaken in a sustained note or swerve for a second from the pitch. Such blemishes are no doubt to be regretted, but they are a hundred times atoned for by the passion and the variety of emotional expression that animate their voices, and by their superb acting. Fräulein Brandt's *Ortrud*, *Eglantine*, and *Fides* will be referred to generations hence as models, as will Herr Niemann's *Tannhäuser*, *Siegmund*, *Cortez*, *Lohengrin*, *Tristan*, etc. New Yorkers must consider themselves fortunate in having heard for two seasons the greatest of Wagnerian tenors—even though he is no longer in his prime—the man who sang the title

rôle of "Tannhäuser" when that opera was produced in Paris in 1861; who created the part of *Siegmund* in 1876 at Bayreuth; and who, in his way, has done as much to popularize Wagner's operas as Liszt did during the Weimar period, when people had to go to that city to hear "Lohengrin" and "Tannhäuser," as they now go to Bayreuth to hear "Parsifal." He is not only valuable for the sake of his artistic qualities, but because of his enthusiasm for the cause of the best music. Wagner held him in the highest esteem; and he wrote in his review of the Bayreuth festival of 1876, that without Niemann's devotion and ardor its success would not have been assured. He regretted subsequently that he did not ask Niemann to create the *rôle* of *Siegfried* in the last drama of the Tetralogy, as well as that of *Siegmund* in the second. Thanks to this mistake, New Yorkers had the privilege of hearing Niemann's *début* in this *rôle* —at the age of fifty-seven, an age when most tenors have retired on their pensions.

Three artists are included in the present company at the Metropolitan whom Mr. Stanton could not dispense with under any circumstances. One of these is Herr Fischer, who, now that Scaria is no more, is beyond comparison the finest dramatic bass on the stage. No Italian could have a more mellow and sonorous voice, and his method has all the conscientiousness, passion, and distinctness of enuncia-

tion that characterize the German style. His *Wotan* and his *Hans Sachs*, especially, are marvels of operatic impersonation. Herr Alvary, the second of the vocalists who unite Italian with German merits, is a young singer who has a great future before him, if his *Siegfried*, a most realistic and powerful impersonation, may be argued from. And as for the third of these artists—Lilli Lehmann—her equal can hardly to-day be found on the operatic stage. It is very characteristic of the late Intendant of the Berlin theatres—Herr von Hülsen (who waited nine years before he accepted "Lohengrin" for performance, and afterward repeated the same *faux pas* with the Nibelung Trilogy)—that he confined Fräulein Lehmann for years to subordinate *rôles*. Indeed, although she had acquired considerable fame abroad, it may be said that her real career did not begin till she came to New York. Here her rare merits were at once recognized, and instead of resting on her laurels, she has grown more admirable as an actress and singer every year. Her voice has a sensuous beauty that is matchless, and no other prima donna, except Materna, has emotion in her voice so deep and genuine as that which moves us in Lehmann's *Isolde* and *Brünnhilde*.

She made her *début* in 1866, at Prague, and ten years later sang the small *rôles* of the first Rhine

maiden and the forest bird in "Rheingold" and "Siegfried," at the Bayreuth festival—little fancying, perhaps, that she would twelve years later be the queen of German opera in America. She takes excellent care of her voice, and never allows the weather to interfere with her daily walk of several miles. Her versatility is extraordinary, for she sings *Norma* and *Valentine* as well as she does *Isolde*. She scouts the idea that Wagner's music ruins the voice, agreeing on this point with the most famous vocal teacher of the day, Madame Marchesi. It is only when Wagner's music is sung to excess that it injures the voice, according to Fräulein Lehmann, because it requires such extraordinary power to cope with the orchestra. Heretofore she has not always succeeded in holding her own against the full orchestra, but in her latest and greatest impersonation—*Brünnhilde*, in "Die Götterdämmerung"—her voice rivalled Materna's in power without losing a shade of its sensuous beauty, which is always enchanting.

If it were possible to secure half a dozen more singers like Lehmann, Alvary, and Fischer, the operatic problem might be regarded as solved. It is the scarcity of first-class acting vocalists that makes opera so expensive, and prevents it from being self-supporting. The number of first-class singers is so small that every manager competes for them,

and enables them to charge fancy prices, which are ruinous to any manager who has no government or other support to fall back on.

It is a curious thing, this scarcity of good singers. We read so much about all professions being overcrowded; and yet here is a profession in which success literally means millions, and yet so few come forward in it that managers are at their wits' ends what to do, especially in the case of tenors. Herr Niemann obtains seven hundred and fifty dollars for every appearance; Fräulein Lehmann gets six hundred dollars, and there are singers who are much better paid still because they appear under the star system. Surely this ought to be a sufficient bait to catch talented pupils. How many professions are there in which one can make between five hundred and two thousand dollars in three or four hours?—not to speak of the possibility of winning the great prize—Madame Patti's four or five thousand?

It is sometimes said that the repertory is at fault; but I am convinced that if there were plenty of good singers in the field, many of the operas that were formerly in vogue might be revived successfully—always excepting the flimsy productions of Bellini and Donizetti. It was formerly believed for years that "Lohengrin" was the only one of Wagner's early operas that American audiences cared for. But

"Tannhäuser has, in a few years, become more popular than "Lohengrin," thanks largely to its better staging and interpretation. Owing in a large measure to Fräulein Brandt's *Fides* and Fräulein Lehmann's *Bertha,* Meyerbeer's "Prophète" has been a success for several years. Spontini's "Cortez," Weber's "Euryanthe," Wagner's "Rienzi," and Beethoven's "Fidelio," are among the most interesting revivals during Mr. Stanton's enterprising *régime.*

No composer, and few poets, have ever inspired so many artists to visualize their conceptions on canvas as the poetic scenes suggested in Wagner's dramas. A special exhibition of such pictures was held in Vienna some years ago. It is not too much to say that Wagner's scenic backgrounds are as much more artistic than those of other opera composers as his texts are more poetic than theirs. He avoids frequent changes, and generally has only three scenes for an opera. But each of these, if executed according to his directions, is a masterpiece, and impresses itself on the memory like the canvas of a master.

The performance of the Trilogy in New York has naturally revived among the Wagnerites the question as to which of the master's works is the greatest. Leaving aside "Tristan" and "Die Meistersinger," which he never surpassed, many regard the first act of "Die Walküre" the most finished of Wagner's

creations ; and certainly it has a marvellously impressive climax—*Siegmund's* drawing of the sword from the ash-tree, and the love duo which follows ; and another in *Wotan's* farewell in Act III. But grand as these are, many consider the last act of "Die Götterdämmerung" the supreme achievement of Wagner. The exquisite trio of the Rhine maidens swimming and singing in a picturesque forest scene ; the death of *Siegfried*, and the procession that slowly carries his body by the light of the moon up the hill ; and the burning of the funeral pyre at the end, until it is put out by the rising waters of the Rhine bearing the maidens on the surface ; these scenes, with the glorious music accompanying, cannot be matched by any act of any other opera. Nevertheless, as a whole, "Siegfried" is, in my opinion, the grandest part of the Trilogy. In no other work of Wagner is there such a minute correspondence, every second, between the poetry, music, and scenery. Every action and gesture on the stage is mirrored in the orchestra ; and I shall never forget the remark made to me in 1876, at Bayreuth, by a musician, that in "Siegfried" we hear for the first time music such as Nature herself would make if she had an orchestra.

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